

Lord Chaitanya A Biographical Critique

Volume II

Biman Bihari Majumdar



Dr. Biman Bihari Mazumdar (1900-1969) had worked for long 21 years before he embarked on the present leviathan on Lord Chaitanya and his contemporaries. While this book (originally published in Bengali in 1938) brought him instant fame, he never rested on his laurels. A scholar by inner compulsion, he made significant contributions thereafter to allied fields of literary criticism, sociology and a variety of subjects of contemporary interest.



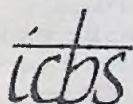


Lord Chaitanya : A Biographical Critique

Volume II

Biman Bihari Majumdar

Translated by
Jibendranath Siddhanta



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Translator's Note

The present volume like its predecessor endeavours to maintain the maximal fidelity of translation compatible with the exacting need of updating and abridgement of a great original. Indeed the greater the merit of the original, the harder seems the translator's job. To maintain the connectedness of the two volumes we have appended to the present volume a rapid summary of the preceding one. It is hoped that the cognoscenti would bear with the unintentional foibles of the translator.

Chapter XIV

Some quasi-authentic works on Sri Chaitanya

Pradyumna Misra's

Srikrishna Chaitanyodayabali

The author (Dr. B. B. Mazumder) first noticed this work in its first edition as it appertained to one Haridas Goswami. This Mr. Goswami was a Vaishnab writer and an inhabitant of Nabadwip. One Chaitanyacharan Das Got it printed and published in Srihatta. The first edition of the booklet comprising 25 regular pages in print had besides six pages of (genuine) interpolation, the latter being an innocuous handwritten addendum meant for an annotation of the text through Sanskrit Slokas together with their Bengali versions. It has been presumed that the publisher was a lawyer by profession.

The publisher has acknowledged two books as the source-material of the work under consideration, one of them being declared very 'olden' and the other being advertised as a celebrated work compiled by some Achyut Tattwanidhi. There are notable lapses of the work made out to be Pradyumna Misra's. Some verses or distichs of the reference books have been omitted. More importantly, the publication-time of either reference is left out. There is, however, a hand-written reference to the date of composition of Pradyumna Misra's book. The declared date is 1432 Shakabda. The date as given is suspect. For Sri Chaitanya was about 25 in 1432 Shakabda. There is no reason to believe that any Pradyumna Misra ever met Sri Chaitanya at the time as he should have according to the booklet, in question. The whole thing is problematic. Even the chronology is open to question.

As far as the lawyer-publisher's note (by way deposition!) goes, we vouchsafe his claim to his arduous but abortive bid to gather Mr. Misra's bio-data. Some Misras of Burunga and other vicinities of Dhaka, who claimed to be his scions, failed to furnish concrete facts about one of their illustrious sires!

It is of interest to note that there is a mention of two persons bearing the name, Pradyumna, in the part of Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita dealing with the finale of the Lord's Lila. One of them is a proven Orissa-man. The other was someone of unknown antecedents. But the Lord himself must have known him or else he would not send the person, in question, as his emissary to Roy Ramananda. The crucial point is provided by the authentic Chaitanyabhagbat as well as kabikarnapur's epic. One is persuaded to believe that the so-called non-Oriya Pradyumna was known as Pradyumna Brahmachari, which confutes the reality of a second (non-Oriya) Pradyumna Misra. One and only one Pradyumna Misra, on the other hand, never met Sri Chaitanya till 1434 Shakabda. (Note that Shakabda-reckoning is 78 years behind the usual reckoning is the year of the Christian Lord, Jesus Christ.) As noted above, it is absurd to claim that he (Pradyumna Misra) authored a Chaitanya biography in 1432 Shakabda.

The text, in question, itself is enigmatic also. There is nothing much about Sri Chaitanya himself, the recurrent theme being his close link with Srihatta. There is, however, an account of the forefathers of Sri Chaitanya and also a miracle-story about his grandmother anticipating his divinity. The account of the forefathers is spoilt by contradictory assumptions. The episode concerning the grandmother is to be taken with grain of salt also. In his zeal to turn Srihatta into a pivot of Sri Chaitanya's life, the author makes Sri Chaitanya's parents shuttle between Nabadwip and Srihatta, forgetting that in the Pre-Hussain Shah days such wayfaring was beset with dangers.

It was an age of anarchy that fostered banditry and related crimes. If the booklet be taken on its face value, it was pretty simple even for an enceinte wife to journey from Srihatta to Nabadwip! Even more fantastic is the alleged date of Jagannath Misra's demise, which occurred, according to the booklet, both before and after Lakshmi and Biswambhar were married. (A hand-written emendment placed the said demise anterior to the marriage concerned.)

The abrupt cut applied to Sri Chaitanya's life has been rationalized very cleverly by an address to his infinitude vis-a-vis the insignificant writer himself. But the writer is gay even in his insignificance. He has, after all, significantly magnified the importance of Srihatta on the naissance of the Lord. What else must he try? His purpose has been served with the highlighting of Srihatta.

The spurious quotes from scriptures and revered texts such as Padmapuran occur in the booklet under consideration. The quotes are such as bear out the Avatarhood of Sri Chaitanya well in advance of the millennium whereto he was to belong. (While the translator is prone to believe, in principle the prophesying power of spiritual stalwarts such as we find in the prophesy made in Bhrgusamhita or Vishnupuran, the author, Dr. Mazumder, in his wonted noncommittal questions the genuineness of the quote itself.) Erudite scholars like Srijib Goswami and Kabikarnapur, who must have been in the know of Padmapuran et cetera, never mentioned any such prophesy about the child to be born at Nabadwip being a divine child. The author suspects tendentious interpolation in the said old text to be the cause of 'Pradyumna's confusion. (We put the controversial name, Prdyumna, within inverted commas in deference to the de facto evidence in print, which, as noted above, is due to a lawyer-publisher of the booklet, in question.) Baladev Vidyabhusan, the scholar, who sought to vindicate the

divinity of Sri Chaitanya, lived till the sought to vindicate the divinity of Sri Chaitanya, lived till the mid-18th century. Neither did he come across such spurious excerpts in the texts such as Padmapuran being fobbed in. The practice must be of a rather recent time.

Further ground for scepticism about the genuineness of this booklet, 'Srikrishna Chaitanyodayabali' pervades the article written in 1342 BS Achyut Babu for the Agrahayan number of the magazine, Brahma-vidya, where three books in Bengali have been claimed to be based on the controversial booklet but where these 'translated versions' publication-dates or even composition-dates remain uncharted. Neither has Achyut Babu himself vouched for the oldness of these version.

All these lapses notwithstanding, a claim is jumped by the patrons of the hypothetical Prodyumna Misra (whose bona-fides are not established) to the effect that an agnate of the Lord composed this booklet, in question in deference to his (Sri Chaitanya's) own bidding. Nothing can be more ridiculous than such unfounded braggadocio. A veteran scholar and litterateur, Atulkrishna Goswami, a Vaishnab himself—has rightly characterized such tall claims as brazen hunt for fame. The booklet being rife with bitter remarks against the Vaishnab literature, one would reject a priori its vain claim of being a doing of the Lord's bidding.

Ishan Nagar's Adwaita-Prakash :

Mr. Achyut Tatwanidhi was the first to introduce Ishan Nagar to the reading public. In the foot-note added to his article in the Magh number of the 1303 B.S. Volume of the Sahitya-Parishad-Patrika, he referred to a copy of Adwaita-Prakash, originally composed in 1703 Shakabda, which the article-Writer took great pains to procure. The original work preserved at Jhakpal has been fac-similed as the said writer contends. The

work should come out in print, which would do a great service to the cause of vaishnab and Bengali literature at large. The Rangpur Sahitya Parishat Patrika, 2. 2. 92 (1314 B.S) published the report that the said book was in fact seen in print by the courtesy of some publisher known for its interest in colportage. (In Bengal such publishers are to carry a pèjorative qualifier, Battala. Peddlers sell their cheap, trite books.) The printing work used for this book was a very crude artifice of wood-carving, as the last mentioned reference alleges. Once you give credence to the content of Ishan Nagar's 'Adwaita-Prakash', you will be obliged to rank it as high as Murari Gupta's Karcha, if not higher still. Its claim to authenticity is of so unique that a credulous reader will deem it even more reliable authority on Sri Chaitanya's life and teachings than that celebrated work of Murari Gupta. Fact remains, however, that three, and only three, biographers of Sri Chaitanya had the privilege of sighting the master. Kabikarnapur and Jayananda had seen him each in his boyhood. Jayananda lacked inquisitiveness and was content to record some standard messages of the master and a number of hear-say episodes bearing on his life. Kabikarnapur had the gift of a considerate scholar but no knowledge at first hand of the Lord's lila at Nabadwip. Murari, the other Privileged biographer to have seen the Lord had the mortification of being challenged in respect of his account of the Nilachal Lila of Lord Chaitanya. None of Kabikarnapur, Brindabandas and Krishnadas Kaviraj vouchsafed Murari's authenticity. Ishan Nagar, on the other hand claims to have seen things for himself or heard of them from some or other eye-witness.

(From his account, given in verse whose naive diction seldom fails to keep the metrical rigour one would be persuaded to take his word for fact, that is to believe him wholesale. Rhyming has been of a good quality throughout, eye-rhymes being not very frequent either. To maintain rhyme

and metre without ever indulging enjambment is no mean feat for one who describes oneself as no better than a man-Friday at Adwaita's household and whose academic attainments are anybody's guess. In fact, Ishan Nagar never gives any hint either to describe that aspect of his own life.) Ishan Nagar has made no bones of his having received Adwaita's affection and also his wife Sita's care. We learn from Ishan's report that it was Sita herself who prepared various comestibles for Biswambhar and Nityananda on the fateful day when the two had visited Adwaita to settle certain theoretical issues on which the elderly philosopher differed with the younger devotees of Lord Krishna. He speaks of his own humble role on that memorable occasion of the Lord's august visit in very meretricious modesty :

‘Mui adham koila taar jaler tahali’

(His verse-line signifies : I was the menial there

Ambulating to fetch him water.)

(Vaishnabs' fondness for ostensible humility has been a legacy of the cult itself. Even to-day one speaks of showy and excessive humility as vaishnab-binoy, the word binoy meaning humility. But Ishan has been overly modest even by Vaishnab standards. The following lines from his book, Adwaita Prakash, speak volumes for this trait of his.)

‘Gourer pada dhouta lagi mui keet genu ı’

Taba mui keet harshe kohinu Chaitanye ı

Daya kori kaho kichhu ei bhaktishunye ॥

Sahasye madhur bhashe Gouranga Kohilaa ı

Shunaha Ishan Shastra jaahaa Prakaashilaa ॥

The lines purport to what Follows :

I washed Gour's holy feet—

A mean vermin as I was indeed.

Smiling to Chaitanya I Prayed—

'Though devotionless I wish you said
something' when the Lord in grace

The truth of scriptures relates.

Note that Ishan on this occasion met the Lord at Nilachal where Adwaita was residing. Sri Chaitanya was invited by Adwaita to his Nilachal residence. Ishan was present as Adwaita's constant companion-cum-attendant. Incidentally, Adwaita's son, Achyut, was exactly his own age as Ishan avers. If we are to go by Ishan's menology, Sri Chaitanya was 6 years and 2 months his senior (as also Achyut's). He has written little about his job at Adwaita's. It is only mentioned that he was with his mentor and master Adwaita till the latter died in 480 Shakabda. On his own admission he lived as Adwaita's aide for no fewer than 66 years. May be, he had initially been meant manual jobs such as helping the cook and suchlikes. His mean assignment did not demean him at all. Sita and Achyut were kind to him.

Ishan claims to have heard Adwaita, Nityananda, Achyut, Padmanabha Chakraborty and Shyamadas relate a number of important incidents (connected with the life of Sri Chaitanya), to wit,

1. 'Most of the relevant information he has, has for its source Adwaita's own statements, for instance, as far as that has to do with happenings prior to Sri Chaitanya's advent or those of his early life till Achyuta reached the state of conscious individuality, by which, we guess, he meant the age at which a child begins to read and write. Describing (on the basis of Adwaita's testimony) the sacred thread festival of Chaitanya, Ishan has written in his book the following for a modesty-showing epilogue :

'Kshudra mui apaar Gourlilar Kibaa Jaani ॥

Taar sutra likhi jei Prabhumukhe Shuni' ॥

[English version of the couplet :

'I'm too puisne to fathom Gour's divine play
I recount verbatim what my mentor'd say'.]

2. On the authority of Nityananda who claimed to have joined Sri Chaitanya during his water-sports as his play-mate, Ishan writes :

'Sripad Nityananda Prabhur mukhabjanisrita १
Ei lilarasaamrita piyaa hoinu puta.

English version :

Hearing master Nityananda relate
This divine play I felt sanctified.

3. Achyuta, who took lessons at Biswambhar's coaching centre, related the facts of Sri Chaitanya's life as a teacher and also those relating to his passage to East Bengal, Laxmi's demise and wedlock with Bishnupriya. Ishan says, exposition alone is his, the clue to its source is what Achyut had related. In his characteristic humility he refers to the issue in the following terms :

'Sri Achyut kahe more ei shuvaakhyaan १
Taar sutra laba maatra kariba byaakhyaan ॥'

English version :

Achyut told me the sacred tale
My job is merely to expound it well.

4. Ishan was not at all a well-read person. In any case he did not even know of the antecedence of the works of Murari, Brindabandas and Kabikarnapur to his own work—let alone reading them. Of the life of Adwaita his scholarship was confined to a solitary book. It was no textual testimony that he based his writing on. What he heard instead from Adwaita, Nityananda and Achyut, for example, served for his source-material. Add to it what he himself had witnessed to have a comprehensive view of the ingredients of his work.

The invariant feature of his works, namely a penchant for self-denunciation by way of humility-parade, is even more poignant while self-denunciation by way of humility-parade, is even more poignant while he goes write finis on his grand verse-biography of Sri Chaitanya. The Following lines are from the concluding part of his book :

‘Bidyabuddhi naahi mor koiche grantha likhi ॥
 Ki likhite ki likhinu dharam taar sakshi ॥
 Lauria Krishnadaser balyalila-sutra ॥
 Je grantha parile hoy bhubon pabitra ॥
 Je parinu je shuninu Krishnadas-mukhe ॥
 Padmanabha Shyamadas je kahilaa moke ॥
 Papchokshe je lila mui karinu darshan ॥
 Prabhu aajna mate taahaa karinu granthan ॥’

English version :

Being a nitwit of little learning,
 How can I go 'bout book-making?
 Idea's shift by the inept word—
 God knows how far severed
 They 're—I'm in debt, albel
 To Lauria Krishnadas's work—I felt,
 one who his tale of the Lord's boyhood'd peruse
 Would see this very earth with holy rays suffuse.
 I've recorded what he or Padmanabha
 Or Shyamadas told or what my vile eyes saw.
 And I had set about book-making
 Purely to do my master's bidding.

If, then, all these claims be genuine, Ishan Nagar would command the same authority as Murari. The prima facie evidence would even indicate Ishan's superiority in that unlike Murari, Ishan supplies the detailed chronology—calendarwise

and menologically as well. Murari has left out the dates altogether while Kabikarnapur, Brindabandas and Krishnadas Kaviraj have only partially noted them. Their selective date-labels, however, do not indicate when, for instance Nityananda, Adwaita and Haridas were born respectively, Neither do they mention even the date of Adwaita's demise. If we would feel like knowing how older those celebrities were than Sri Chaitanya, their books would be of no help. Ishan Nagar is the author who has meticulously recorded all these facts and figures, and has indicated the intended dates as well. What is more, he has virtually given the horoscope of Adwaita's as well.

(The translator does not intend to reproduce the chapter and verse meant to mention the age of one or the other person of interest some abridgement cannot be helped, really.)

From Ishan's verses we learn that Adwaita was 52 years Sri Chaitanya's senior and that Adwaita's life-span was of 125 years (1434-1559 sh.) Haridas, we are told, was born in 1372 sh. ie. 1450 A.D.

Ishan describes the student-life of the Lord as follows :

'Gourer bayas jabe panch batsar hoila ॥

Shubhakshane Misra taar haate Khari dila ॥

Prathame Sri Gangadas Panditer sthaane ॥

Dui barshe byakaran koila samapane ॥

Dui barshe Parilaa Sahitya alankar ॥

Tabe gela Sriman Bishnu Misrer gochar ॥

Tanha dui barsha smriti jyotish parila ॥

Sudarshan panditer sthaane tabe gela ॥

Tanr sthaane sardarshan parila dui barshe ॥

Tabe gela Basudeb Sarbabhoum paashe ॥

Tanr sthane tarkashastra Parila dwibatsare ॥

Ebe tua paash aailaa veda paribare ॥

English version :

Misra initiates go studies Gour at five
 Two years with Gangadas make him ripe
 In grammar; here letters and poetries come next
 To be followed by Smriti, and astrology-text
 Under Bishnu Misra; he next chose
 To master six philosophical systems. of course
 Under a mentor, Sudarshan; Basudeb teaches him
 logic—
 But he learns every discipline so quick.
 He takes a mere couple of years for each,
 To Adwaita, fine, for the vedas he 'd reach.

From another couplet it is 'seen' that Sri Chaitanya was about 16 or 17 when he came to Adwaita to take lessons in the Vedas. The year of his starting the Vedas being given as 1423 or 1424 sh., it follows that he was between 16 and 17 at the time. Ishan has also Indicated in this connection the duration of his studies under Adwaita. He writes,

'Gourer ek barsha hoila atikram ॥
 Tahe Veda-Bhagbat hoila pathan ॥

He means here :

Just one year Gour took to finish
 His Veda and Bhagbat studies.

Nityananda was twelve years Sri Chaitanyas senior, his date of birth, according to Ishan, being on the 13th lunar day as reckoned from the previous full moon and in the year 1395 sh. Ishan has noted the date of birth of all six sons of adwaita. Ishan has recorded many important dates. But most of these cannot be verified. In fact, other standard texts have given no dates except those of the birth and death of Nityananda and Adwaita. One thing is of interest, though of little veridical worth. And that is the consistency of various chronolical data provided by Ishan.

[The following points have, however, been noted by the author, Dr. Mazumdar, some of which tend to question the alleged consistency of Ishan. The first question raised by the author concerns Krishnadas's desire to meet Sri Chaitanya when in 1512 A.D. he had just returned to Puri after a tour across the deccan. Krishnadas at about 16 is said to be married. The author is somewhat sceptical about it. He further questions whether sita was in advanced Pregnancy when Sri Chaitanya visited Adwaita to settle certain theoretical issues concerning the path of knowledge and the path of devotional love. If she was parturient, the report given by Ishan that she cooked many delicacies for the revered guest must be taken cum grano salis. The author is not sanguine. Still, an uncomfortable doubt about Ishan's correctness persists. He looks over the chronology of events of 1431 sh. and concludes that there is no inconsistency in Ishan's reports. The crucial point that forced the conclusion was that the youngest (twin) children of Sita were one year old each when the Lord's reported Visit took place. The author approvingly quotes Achyut Tattwanidhi who defends Ishan on all issues without exception.]

Certainly we find new materials in Ishan's book which never occurred in the works of Murari, Kabikarnapur, Brindabandas, Lochan, Jayananda et al. Krishnadas Kaviraj or Narahari or any other biographer of Sri Chaitanya were presumably not aware of several unique facts incorporated in Ishan's book. Even later writers of devotional poetry centred round the Lord were ignorant of all these.

Some of the unique entries in Ishan's 'Adwaita-Prakash' are enumerated below with brief notes :

According to 'Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita', Sri Chaitanya had disputation with the votaries of the Modhwa doctrine, which means that he questioned the doctrine itself.

This report definitely militates against the contention upheld by 'Gourganoddeshdeepika', which characterizes Sri Chaitanya as one of the Madhwa community-Ishan, on the other hand refers to Adwaita's encounter with Madhabendra Puri and also to his reading with him the Bhagbat and the Madhwa text. It was in 1454-55 A.D. that in course of his pilgrimage, which followed his parents' deaths, Adwaita turned up at the site of Madhwaacharya. Presumably, it was in 1452-53 A.D. that Adwaita saw the 'Anantasamhita' in Madhabendra Puri's Possession. Ishan reports the afternath as follows :

'Taahaa pori prabhu mahaa anandita hoila ॥
 Prabhu kahe Nandasuta sharoiswarjya purna ॥
 Gour rupe Nabadwipe hoila abatirna ॥
 Harinaam prem diya jagat taaribe ॥
 Mo adhamer banchha tabe abashya puribe ॥
 Kohitei hoila prabhur prem uddipan ॥
 Praharek Gournaame Kare Sankirtan ॥
 "Gour mor pranpati jaahe taare paaon ॥
 Vedadharma longhi mui taahaa choli jaaon ॥

We render into English the above verse-lines in the following way :

Perusal of the book brings the master pleasure :
 says he, 'Nanda's child exudes yogic power.
 To redeem the world he incarnates at Nabadwip as Gour
 By love of Hari's name—his fond detour.
 My poor self's aspiration shall fulfil.
 Such utterance spurs ecstatic love-thrill,
 And hence the master spends hours on end
 Abjuring Vedic path and seeking Gour instead.

[The translator wonders what causes the author to take it as it appears. Adwaita here speaks of Gour's incarnation at

Nabadwip to redeem the ailing world by his love of Hari, or, to be precise the incantation of Hari's name. In fact, Adwaita himself gets engrossed in that act and for hours at that. So far so good. But what must one say about the glaring anachronism of Gour being described in error-free detail and that too some 32 or 33 years before Gour was even born? As we know, Gour first saw the light of the world in 1485 A.D. And his activities of youth are being narrated and eulogized by Adwaita in 1452-53 A.D. The dose of spiritual power to forsee the coming is rather too much for Adwaita to possess. While such miraculous anticipation is not impossible, leaving the quaint episode without disputation is mystifying too.]

2. Adwaita met Vidyapati at Mithila. [Even this revelation is another exclusive feature of Ishan's book. None else has referred to the incident.]

3. Madhabendra once left Brindaban to Puri. He stopped at Shantipur enroute to puri and enjoined Adwaita to marry. The justification of marriage according to Madhabendra reads in Ishan's verse as

'Krishna Kripaay hoibe taanhaar bahut santan ॥

Jib nistaribe sabhe diyaa krishnanaam ॥'

English version :

Many issues by Krishna's grace he 'd gain,

Who by bestowing Krishna-name 'd liberate men.

4. Ishan Nagar is the lone author to have shown that Raghunathdas, the devotee fond of Brajalila was a disciple of one belonging to the family of Adwaita. His initiator, Jadunandanaacharya came a cropper earlier in the debate with the bhakta Haridas and consequently adopted the cult of Bhakti or devotional love. One harlot once made some wanton proposal to Haridas. Haridas's disdainful retort reads, in Ishan's verse, like

Inha hoite aaji tuhu karaha prasthan ॥
 Je jan tulsi kanthi naa Kare dhaaran ॥
 Jei naahi kare bhaale tilak rachan ॥
 Jaar mukhe Krishna-nam naa hoy sfuran ॥
 Sei Sab jan hoy pashanda odham ॥
 Nirjas janiho taaraa Krishna-bahirmukh ॥
 Kavu Sadhu naahi dekhe se sabhaar mukh ॥
 Oichhe sadbesh kori jadi kara aagaman ॥
 Tabe Krishna tor baanchha karibe puran ॥

These verse-lines in Bengali purport to what follows :

Away with you—vile is the lass
 Who sports no basil-necklace
 Or sectarian mark on forehead.
 Averse to Krishna—name chanting are the ill-bred
 Divergent from Krishna are the cross-grained.
 A sage keeps them at bay always;
 Purify yourself to deserve Krishna's grace.

Berated by Haridas, the strumpet turned out to be a vaishnabee. She came to be known as Krishnadasee.

5. Adwaita initiated Sachi and Jagannath to spiritual life. The initiation - hymn comprised the nominal elements Gour-Gopal. Biswarup was born after the initiation.

[The eloquent silence of the author, Dr. Mazumdar, on the recurrent theme of Adwaita's anticipation of the divinity and the nick-name of Sri Chaitanya even before his elder's birth, is inexplicable.]

6. Sachi took the initiation but did not chant Hari's name as expected. The nemesis came down on her—the new-born baby. Gour would never suck her breast-milk.

7. One Bharati gave Biswambhar the sacrificial thread, and Jagannath Misra is, allegedly, the one who administered the

hymn of Vishnu for him. This would mean that an initiation of Biswambhar, prior to the one he had of Ishwarpuri at Gaya, was a fact.

8. Another speciality of Adwaita-Prakas consists in the subject-wise and year-wise analysis of Biswambhar's educational career, which analysis also mentioned the successive teachers who taught him. We have already mentioned them and need not go into those details here.

9. The five year old child, Krishna Misra, had the occasion to taste banana for once, which was done without his mother's leave and in accompaniment of the grand hymn, 'salutation to Gour'. Gouranga did not take any meal that day. The incident in versified form of the Adwaita-Prakash reads:

'Eto kahi tihon ek chhaarilaa udgaar ॥

Rambhaar gandha payan sabhe hoila chamatkaar ॥'

English version :

'So saying he eructs for once

Its banana-odour everyone stuns.

10. Lokenath and Gadadhar would read the Bhagbat with Adwaita. Their pronounced reading produced an amazing result—Bishwambhar would automatically retain in his memory whatever he heard.

11. Ishan gives the following (presumably eye-witness) accounts of Achyut's query about poetics and the answer given by Gouranga, who was his teacher :

'Ekdirn Sri Achyut kahe Gourchandre ॥

Mukher upama bhali koichhe hoy chandre ॥

Mriganke kalanka bahu dekhi bidyaman ॥

Anujwal roupayabarna seha apradhan ॥

Taahaa shuni Nimai Vidyasagar anande ॥

Sasneha prashansi kahe Sri Achyutanande ॥

Ahlader angshe hoy mukher upamaa ॥

Kona bastur sarba angshe naa hoy tulana ॥'

English version :

'How can the lack-lustre moon so stained
pass for the face's image— isn't it strained ?'
Gouranga in affection would tell,
'The joy linking each is the simile's rationale—
Nothing admits of a parallel wholesale;

12. Achyut accompanied Biswambhar in course of his tour of East Bengal.

13. Or Nemai, returned from Gaya, Ishan Writes,

'Dwaadash angete koila tilak dharan ॥
Sarba ange harinam karila likhan ॥
Tulasi kaashter maalaa kanthete parila ॥
Shankha Chakraakaar Chihna kena baa dharila ॥'

English version :

His twelve limbs bore sectarian marks each
And Harinam as writ all over his person, which
Also sported a basil twig's necklace.
But the conch and wheel emblem?
what that indicates?

14. Biswambhar taught both grammar and philosophy. Note that Murari and Lochan have specified the subject he taught to be domestic rituals while Brindabandas and Kaviraj Goswami mark out his subject as grammar.

15. Adwaita composed the annotations of the Gita and the Yogabaashistha, and read into them the cult of devotional love or bhakti.

16. Sitadevi would wrap up her mouth by linen if and when she would cook for the deity Madangopal or for Bishwambar.

17. Ishan mentions the following incident referring to Sri Chaitanya's reaction to Tribeni river he approached en route to Brindaban :

'Din byapy Gora yamunaay dubi roila'.

The line in Bengali quoted above signifies :

Gora dipped his limbs out and away

In the Yumna river the livelong day.

18. Achyut joined Sri Chaitanya at Brindaban after the Lord had been there, leaving Puri. From 'Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita' one knows that his visit to Brindaban was very brief—he stayed there no more than a few days. Considering the dilatory postal service of those days, we realize that it would be impossible for Achyut to see Sri Chaitanya at Brindaban if he had been invited by a letter. [This point has been stressed by Dr. Mazumdar. It's curious that he did not consider the perfect possibility of Achyuta's responding to a letter-message, if the letter had been written before Sri Chaitanya Started for Brindaban. But the whole argument is of the German philosopher vaihinger's 'als ob' variety. We are asked here to consider a situation as if someone has really referred to some such invitation by letter. The fact remains that none has. In any case, the writer of our current interest has not. Hence the question of inconsistency of an invitation by letter and the fact of Sri Chaitanya's brief stay at Brindaban as averred by Krishnadas in his 'Sri Chaitanya Charitaamrita' does not arise at all.]

We go to wind up the uncanny chapter on a pseudo-question by an address to Ishan's original remark in verse :

'Aay aay buli Gora koilaa aakarshan ॥

Yogi Sama taanhaa aailaa sitaar Nandan ॥

Shantipur hoite Braja bahu diner pathe ॥

Achyut aaila Gorar aajnaa—pusparathe ॥

Krishna Krishna-bhakter achintya shakti hoy ॥

Sakali sambhabe ithe naahiko bismay ॥'

English version :

Gora's magic will to see him must fulfil

Wafted as though in a chariot of his will

Arrives Sita's son, Achyut, from Shantipur abode
 To a remote Braja to join his Lord.
 No wonder a devotee shows
 Such tour de force as Lord Krishna bestows.

[So it is a spiritual communication of the lightning speed rather than a postal correspondence of a snail's pace that enjoined Achyut to see Sri Chaitanya During his brief stay at Brindaban. There is, then, no conflict with Krishnadas. But the endless conflict is within ourselves. Do we really believe in the supraphysical communication as Yogis are said to employ ad lib? The author, Dr. Mazumdar makes a cryptic remark that Ishan would fail to narrate Sri Chaitanya's tour of Brindaban had it not been for a eharlot propelled by Sri Chaitanya's will-power. In any other event Ishan would also fail to cover in his book the important episodes such as Rup and Sanatan's good fortune to learn form Sri Chaitanya what the master taught. Even reference to the master's disputation with Pundits of Kashi would be impossible. These matters are only discussed by Krishnadas Kaviraj in his book, 'Sri Chaitanya Charitaamrita', Which was composed as many as 47 years after Ishan had composed 'Adwaita-Prakash'. By implication, Achyut's timely arrival is made out to be instrumental in causing the master to act as he did. Dr. Mazumdar's passing reference to the alleged Chariot of will makes things enigmatic unless our hypothesis about the crucial role of Achyut be tenable.]

19. On his way back, Sri Chaitanya bestowed Grace on a nude mendicant.

20. Prakashananda is none other than 'Chaitanya Chandramrita's' writer Prabodhananda.

21. while Brindabandas refers only to his grammatical notes, Ishan speaks, in addition, of annotations of logic and Bhagbat

as being Bishwambhar's works. The book on logic was so good that Raghunath feared his own work on logic would be eclipsed by it. Bishwambhar showed a unique spirit of sacrifice when he destroyed his splendid work in order just to please his friend, Raghunath.

22. The Shyamsundar image at Khardah has been the handiwork of Nityananda—so writes Ishan. But Dinesh Sen in an article in the *Bangabani*, and also Murarilal Goswami in 'Vaishnabdigdarshani' contend that Birchandra was the one to be credited with the feat.

23. Sri Chaitanya's demise took place in the Jagannath temple.

24. Ishan regards Raghunath and Dolgobinda—the two sons of Krishna Misra—as incarnations of Sri Gouranga and of Nityananda. This marvellous idea is developed by Ishan in the following manner :

'Swapne Mahaprabhu aasi kahe Adwaitere १
 Mo bichchhede nara duksha naa bhaba antare ॥
 To premaakarshane muin aainu tor ghare १
 Krishna Misrer putrarupe dekhibaa aamaare ॥
 Prabhu Nityananda chande Katodin pare १
 Krishna Misrer Putrarupe paaibaa nij ghare ॥'

English version :

Visiting Adwaita in a dream, Mahaprabhu says,
 It's he that in Krishna's son incarnates.
 Nityananda, says he, after so many days
 And as his other son is back to his place.

[A very dubious thing is a dream-message. Ishan was no adept in practical Yoga, nor was Adwaita himself. A very advanced Yogi alone can discern a true voice. In almost all cases of such voices about re-incarnation the truth is that the voice is a misleading, deceptive brick of some mischievous

being of the occult plane. Sometimes an ordinary person's vital being partially merges in one's pet son or grandson, who is already there. True re-incarnation implies the re-birth not an external vital part but of the central entity, the soul. It is simply preposterous that a god-Incarnate, Sri Chaitanya, should choose to be re-born all too soon after his withdrawal. Regarding a human being unlike the divine being such as Sri Chaitanya, quick re-birth is not impossible. But dream messages are to be taken with a grain of salt always. The translator does not think one can accept a priori even the report of Nityananda's re-birth. The interested reader may look up the relevant chapters of Sri Aurobindo's book, 'The Life Divine' for further details.]

25. Birchandra Prabhu had his spiritual initiation at the age of 20. He sought initiation by Adwaita. But Adwaita asked him to have it from jahnabi.

26. Damodar Pandit, Narhari Sarkar Thakur and Gouridas Pandit, who had come to Shantipur Prior to Adwaita's death in 1559 A.D. must have been there at that time.

27. Murari, Kabikaranapur. Brindabandas et al. have not referred to Adwaita's quadrimanual or hexamanual figures which he exhibited to his devotees. But Ishan has this to say on the issue :

'Ek digbijayeeke Adwaita Siddhamurti Dekhaailaa
ati Chamatkaar'

'Nrisinha Bhaduri bhagye prabhur Chaturbhuj dekhilaa'

English version :

'Adwaita showed his supernal shape

To an all-conquering scholar who looked agape.'

'Nrisinha Bhaduri Once per chance

Witnessed the master's quadrimanual stance.'

[The translator feels he must append a note to Ishan's miracle-ales. In most cases disciples cook up miracle-feats to

adonize their master and to heighten his spiritual status. It is not impossible to imagine Adwaita wielding miraculous vital powers. In any case, these powers come to a spiritual seeker long before he realizes anything worth one's while. These powers are often injurious as they tend to make the seeker boastful and showy. A great Yogi, on the other hand, may perform miracles if and when he finds a divine fiat to that effect. It is proper to keep an open mind on what - Ishan writes about the miracles performed by Adwaita. In any case, the translator, who has clarified the point in an academic spirit of neutrality, must reserve his judgement here. To deny or affirm in ignorance is improper. Indeed we possess no data to pass a verdict on Ishan's claim that Adwaita had exhibited his supernatural form to his devotees, such exhibitionism being unexpected in men of Adwaita's temper nevertheless.]

The dubious features of the book :

An umbrage of doubt accompanies anything we hear about unverified things. The present book by Ishan is not indubitable either. Dr. Mazumdar's scepticism is not of this vague nature. He doubts that Adwaita-Prakash is genuine for the reason its obsession with date-labels, a feature not found in a similar text of the period. Indeed, Vaisnab authors have never been so meticulous about the dates of all sorts of events. There arose some doubt about the factuality of certain materials of the book in the mind of the critical reader of the late 19th century. A keen reader of different versions of Sri Chaitanya's life did not so much as put credence in Ishan's contention that Sri Chaitanya belonged to the Madhwa cult or in his report that the Vedas were being studied in Bengal in the 16th century. The report on the passing of Sri Chaitanya, as given by Ishan is also open to question. If a particular author significantly departs from the mainspring of thought as shared by most others or if

an author's book is rife with scoop-news type of specialities never found elsewhere, the keen reader is apt to be sceptical. But, then, Dr. Mazumdar does not discount the genuineness of Ishan's book for the above reason of its uniqueness or uncharteredness. He analyses things more critically. [We reproduce Dr. Mazumdar's arguments below.]

1. To indicate important dates is a virtue of a biography-writer. Unfortunately, Ishan's virtue has been his vice on occasions. Brindabandas's 'Chaitanya Bhagbat' or any book for that matter cannot be an all-inclusive encyclopedia of so chequered a life as Sri Chaitanya's. It would not do to scout any account given by Ishan for the mere reason of Brindabandas's silence on the issue concerned. At the same time nothing that is explicitly there in Brindabandas's 'Chaitanya Bhagbat' is considered suspect, since by common consent, this is an authority on the life of Sri Chaitanya. There is some discrepancy between the account given in 'Chaitanya Bhagbat' and that occurring in the 'Ishan Nagar' concerning Achyut's age when Sri Chaitanya visited Shantipur after his adoption of monkhood. Sri Chaitanya was 24, and hence by Ishan's yardstick of the Lord being 6 years and 2 months Achyut's senior, the latter should be about 18. But the 'Chaitanya Bhagbat' writes,

'Digambar Sishurupe Adwaita-tanay ॥
Naam Sri Achyutaananda mahajyotirmoy ॥
Param sarbajna tinho atarkya pravab ॥
Yogya Adwaiter Putra Sei mahabhaag ॥

English version :

Adwaita-child, Achyut's naked, bright—
Befitting son of a parent, wish and illumined.

Brindabandas considers Achyut tiny child who has nothing on his wear. This implies the child is not much above 2 or 3

years of age, while Ishan would make it 18 or thereabouts.

Ishan might be preferred to Brindaban as an informant if and only if his self-avowed stay at Adwaita's place could be taken for granted. The point is that there is no mention of some such fact in the whole of Vaishnab literature. There is no mention of Ishan in the Adwaita-cult lineage described in the book, 'Sri Chaitanya Charitaamrita'. No Vaishnaba writer has even mentioned Ishan's name. Yet Ishan claims to have received the grace of Sri Chaitanya and the patronage of Adwaita and Nityananda. Brindabandas has mentioned another Ishan who was an attendant the household of Gouranga. Even a maid-servant, Dukkhi, who purveyed potable water for the household of Sribas has been described in Brindabandas's book. How is it they Ishan Nagar alone escaped the attention of all writers of the period?

While it is not possible even to ascertain his identity, Ishan cannot command greater authority than Brindabandas, universally esteemed biographer of Sri Chaitanya. Hence Dr. Mazumdar rejects the claims made by Ishan that Achyut read in Bishwambhar's coaching centre or even accompanied him to East Bengal. Accepting Brindabandas's estimate of Achyut's apparent age (in qualitative terms albeit!), Dr. Mazumdar thinks Achyut was too tender-aged for either feat.

[The translator sees no reason in the author's attitude to Ishan. Casteism was an anathema to Vaishnab writers. But they were not supramental beings free from boast and all the tentacles of ego that ordinary intellectual minds are shot with. It is not any a priori truth that they had no feeling against a rival author. The mere neglect by reputed authors cannot possibly give a lie to the existence of Ishan Nagar. If no such person ever lived in the house of Adwaita, there must be better ways to disprove his existence than pointing to Brindabandas's omission of any reference to his name, Ishan Nagar.

Incidentally, I do not, personally, rule out the possibility that a relatively modern writer, well versed in existing Vaishnab literature including Sri Chaitanya biographies, has added new research-fruit into the extant works, some of which may be as sour as a lie.]

Dr. Mazumdar says, he must believe the authentic account by Brindabandas rather than that by an Ishan of unknown antecedents. Therefore he disbelieves Acyut's encounter with Sri Chaitanya at Brindaban. All his confutation of Ishan's contention and account is a corollary to his axiomatic acceptance of Brindabandas's view that Achyuta was some 18 years Bishwambhar's junior, the age difference being a third thereof according to Ishan. To vindicate his rejection of Ishan's account, the authors quotes as many as ten verse-lines from a pro-Brindabandas author, Krishnadas Kaviraj :

‘Achyutananda barashaakhaa acharyanandan ॥
 Aajanma sebilaa tinho chaitanya-charan ॥
 Chaitanya Gosainir Guru keshab Bharati ॥
 Ei pitaar bakya shuni dukkha paaila ati ॥
 Jagadgurute kara oichhe updeshe ॥
 Tomaar ei updeshe nashta hoila desh ॥
 Choudha bhubaner Guru Chaitanya Gosain ॥
 Tanr Guru anya ei kona Shastni naai ॥
 Pancham barsher balak kahe siddhanter saar ॥
 Shuniaa paaila acharya santosh apaar ॥’

—Sri Chaitanya Charitaamrita

It's enough to give in English the gist of this prolixity-prone verse :

‘Keshab Barati’, says Achintya's father,
 Is Sri Chaitanya's Preceptor.
 At this Achintya's warth turns severe.
 ‘For the world-preceptor no Guru's there.

You vitiate, dad, the country's spiritual ordour.'

Adwaita's enraptured at his 5 year old's rejoinder.

[But, then, is it possible for a five year old to speak a language that expresses the epitome of the scriptures of the country ? Is a greater premium on one's credulity than Ishan demands when he says Achyuta was just six years Sri Chaitanya's junior?]

2. Both Ishan and Murari have referred to Biswarup's birth as the fruition of the ninth pregnancy of Sachi. While Ishan speaks of eight cases of abortion or miscarriage preceding Sachi giving birth to Biswarup, both Murari and Kabikarnapur refer to eight daughters being born successively, none of whom survived long. Kabikarnapur's verse in sanskrit on this point is :

'Kramen chaashtou tanujah purohbbaban

Tathoiba panchatwamupa ya yusha tah. 1'

English version :

Eight daughters in succession born

were into jaws of Death begone.

Murari's authority on the Nabadwip phase of Sri Chaitanya's life is taken for granted by Brindabandas, Lochandas and Krishnadas Kaviraj.

[From a practical or a common sense view-point, miscarriage or abortion may well be an intractable disorder of a woman. It is far more striking a disclosure that all eight daughters born of literate and none-too-indigent parents should have that dreaded base of infantile mortality. While both reports may be grossly distorted and exaggerated, the report given by Murari-Karnapur group is even more suspect. Why is the cause of death or the age at death of each of eight daughters kept a secret? In any case, to draw a bow at a venture is no paradigm of biography-writing. The translator sees no reason to choose

Murari and reject Ishan when everything is shut up from the public view.]

3. Ishan states that Basudeb Dutta is Adwaita's disciple. But in the book, 'Charitaamrita', he is placed in the Chaitanya order.

4. Kabikarnapur's play on Sri Chaitanya points out that Sri Chaitanya was an unknown personage to Sarbabhoum, who is made out to be Bishwambhar's teacher of logic for a continuous period of two years. Dr. Mazumdar asks, 'Can one fail remember a pupil whom one had taught when the pupil was between, 14 and 16 in course of a mere 8 year period of time?'

[The translator finds the author repeating circular arguments. Who will prove that Sarbavoum actually knew no such person as Sri Chaitanya? If kabikarnapur's report be true, Ishan's must be false. If, on the contrary, the protasis used by Dr. Mazumdar be false. Ishan's contention is not bound to be false. The author, Dr. Mazumdar, does not follow the method of scientific induction. His dogmatic deduction as for its a priori premise the following : No famous writer can be false and no not-so-famous writer can be true if he differs from the former. Such axiomatic method may still produce elegant biography but that is not the method of historiography.]

5. Ishan records Nityananda's birth as a thing of 1395 sh, while Brindabandas's report in the 'Chaitanya Bhagbat' is consistent with the date of birth being sometime four years later. Moreover, Nityananda's outfit when he came to Nabadwip, was one an anchorite according to Brindabandas. Ishan has described him as a Vaishnab even in dress, when he first arrived at Nabadwip.

6. Ishan reports that Radhakunda, where Sri Chaitanya bathed, was full of water, while Krishnadas Kaviraj speaks of shallow waters of Radhakunda. Another discrepancy of Ishan is his report of Adwaita's encounter with Vidyapati, which, according to him, took place at Mithila. Quoting reputed

authors like Haraprasad Shastri and Basanta Chatterjee, Dr. Mazumdar points out that Adwaita reached Mithila some five years after Vidyapati had died in 1448 A.D. The Putative encounter is a mere figment. Ishan is also faulted by the author because the former has written that the place-name, Fullabati derives from the occasion of initiation of Laur-Raja by Adwaita while the author contends that Fullabati is an alias of Fulia, a place-name a hundred or a hundred and fifty years older than that occasion.

7. If Ishan's declaration of the date of composition of 'Adwaita-Prakash' be true, it comes to 1568 A.D. That implies its temporal priority over Krishnadas's 'Charitaamrita'. How is it that Ishan's diction is reminiscent of that of a later work, namely 'Charitaamrita'? Dr. Mazumdar does not really consider Ishan's work a pastiche plagiarized from Krishnadas's. Yet he notes a soupcon of Krishnadas-flavour in Ishan. The following parallel distichs from Charitaamrita and from Adwaita-Prakash are cited for proving the point.

Sample 1.

Tirthayaatraay tirthakram kohite naa paari ॥

Dakshin-baame tirthagaman hoy feraa feri ॥

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

Kavubaa dakshine chale kavu chale baame ॥

Preme matoyaaraa taar naahi kona krame ॥

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

English version :

His pilgrimage—itinerary I can't uncover,

As its circuit left and right is not very clear.

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

He treads now right and now left—

Unscheduled and love-intoxicated.

[The translator fails to notice any inter-play between the two. The unplanned movement is necessarily now to left, and now to right. There is no directional sense in any other plain word. 'Left' and 'right' have no plain synonyms either. However, 'One must give the dog a bad name before you hang it.' One more example of resemblance is cited :

Sample 2.

'Kotinaam grahan jajna kori ekmaase 1

Ei diksha kariaachhi hoila aaji sheshe 11'

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

Ekmaase kotinaam karaye grahan

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

English version :

'Canting sacred names a crore times in a month

Well, today that sacrament is over at last.'

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

Did a crore name-canting

Within a month's reckoning.

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

[Note the obvious expansion of the acronyms C.C. and A.P. The author's accusation of Ishan's 'Adwaita-Prakash' ('AP') echoing 'Chaitanya Charitaamrita' ('CC') by Krishnadas in the matter of style is not even a whit borne out by his citations. One crore being a numerical constant will remain invariant in the writing of any number of authors. The word 'naam' cannot be given an elegant variation either. Finally, a modern expert on rhetorics and prosody would regard Krishnadas a poetaster and Ishan a poet. Can an imitator excel a model he tries to copy?]

Sample 3.

'Bastutattwe Ishware Jibete naahi bhed 1
 Agnir Satta joichhe sarbadeepete abhed 11
 Tathapi mul agnir joichhe hoy pradhaanyataa 1
 Toichhe sarbeshwar Hari Sakaler dhaataa 11'

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

'Dip hoite joichhe bahu deeper jwala 1
 Mul ek deep taahaa Kariye ganana 11
 Ishwarer tattwa jena jwalita jwala 1
 Jeeber swarup joichhe sfulinger Kana 11

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

English version :

Ontologically, an individual and God are the same,
 Like to one fire-principle inhering every flame.
 Yet the Primal Fire has a prominence,
 So also in Supreme Hari is everyone's sustenance.

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

As a given flame Kindles many more,
 One as their root-cause counts for sure.
 Truth of God is in a flame's flaming
 For the essence of one is like a speck sparking.

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

[As the translator-cum-interpreter, I have nothing to question the priority in time of 'Chaitanya Charitaamrita' over 'Adwaita-Prakash'. This time ordering has been the major premise of Dr. Mazumdar's argument. It is for historians to see if it is a fallacy of illicit major that engenders the conclusion that Ishan emulated Krishnadas. The crux of the matter – who preceded whom? – remains unexplored. Ishan's verse is, as always, more thought-laden and less euphony-lacking as evinced by sample three above. There is the repetition of the Fire-image in the last

distich of Krishnadas. Ishan on the other hand is close to Leibnitz's monadology and to Lord Ramkrishna's explication of Jibkoti and Avatar. It redounds to the glory of Ishan that he anticipated the ideas of a later savant and an Avatar. I am really unable to see how a superior work can be an imitation of something far inferior.]

Sample 4.

'Joichhe Mahavishnu shuiaa anantashajyaay १

Toichhe adwaitaanga Shajyaay Gour liloday ॥

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

'Apane taahaar upare Karila shayan १

Sheshshaayilila prabhu Koila Prakatan ॥

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

English version :

Like Vishnu's eternal bed

Himself on Adwaita's person he laid.

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

He himself lay outstretched thereupon

(Vishnu's) final repose was thus shown

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

[I re-iterate that Krishnadas lacks the precision and the elegance of Ishan. Ishan's diction is more poetical and his ideas less shallow. It is difficult to agree with Dr. Mazumdar as it is difficult to see why a superior writer should draw upon the work of the inferior. In the samples cited so far Ishan's superiority is evident.]

Sample 5.

'Batsalye gaavi pravur chaate sab anga'

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

'Henakaale Goure ghiri gaavi batsyagan १

Krishnagandhe Gour anga karaye lehan ॥

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

English version :

In affection the cow licks
The Lord's lovesome limbs.

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

Beleaguered's Gour by the calves of the kine –

They lick Gour's limbs smelling of Krishna divine.

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

[I referred to Ishan's precision a moment ago. Literary precision is not to be scanned by vernier callipers. It stands out, in this case, by its contrast with the diffuseness of Krishnadas's verse. Two things deserve mention. First, it is not the full-grown cow but her young off-spring – the calf – that capers and gambols – that may come in intimate contact with men. Second, Ishan reproduces something of Lord Krishna's love of calves of the pastures of Brindaban. The pathetic fallacy of Krishna's body-odour such as drew the calves is may be bereft of cognitive meaning but suffused with poetical glory. Ishan sees Krishna in Gour. Krishnadas does not even mention Krishna and Gour in the same breath.]

Sample 6.

Kaashther Puttali Sama jaaniha more १

Sei mato naacho jei taba ichchha sfure ॥

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

Aamaar sharir kaashtha Puttali samaan १

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

English version :

Take me just for a puppet a wood,

Dancing to Master's tune for good.

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

My corporal sheath's forsooth

A puppet wrought wood

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

Sample 7.

Shuniaachhi tinho indrajaal bidyaagune ।
Bhulaailaa urisser jnani sarbabhoume ॥

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

Sarbobhoum Bhattacharya Pandit Prabal ।
Shuni Chaitanyer sange hoila paagal ॥
Sannyaasi naam matra mahaa indrajali ।

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

English version :

He just overpowered by his magic spell
The sapient Sarbabhoum as they tell.

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

Scholar Sarbabhoum is formidable by far.
He was overwhelmed, as I so hear,
By Chaitanya, a magician under monk's cover.

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

Sample 8.

'Gouranga bolite habe pulak sharir ।
Hari Hari bolite nayane babe nir ॥'

—Narottam Thakur's 'Prayer'

Gora naam shuni jaar pulak udyam ।
sei jane jano muin sadhak uttam ॥
Gouranga bolite jaar bahe asrudhaar ।
Sei jan nityasiddha bhakta avatar ॥

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

English version :

He utters 'Gouranga' with somatic thrill
On his canting 'Hari', his eyes with tears fill.

—Narottam Thakur's 'Prayer'

Ecstasy at Gora's name – utterance
Indicates a seeker par excellence.

Flowing tears on mouthing his name

Implies sustained grace and devotion's gem.

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

Sample 9.

Premaabista Gour Adwaitere dekhi vane ।

Kibaascharjya Acharya he aailaa Brindabane ॥

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

Tumi to Adwaita Gosain hethe kena aailaa ।

Aami Brindabane tumi Ki mate jaanilaa ॥

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

English version :

The love-impaled Gour's struck by wonder :

Howcome Adwaita's in Brindaban here!

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

You must be Adwaita— but why 're you here —

My stay at Brindaban how did you infer?

—Chaitanya Charitaamrita (C.C.)

Sample 10.

'Rup and Sanatan took lessons in spirituality from
Srichaitanya on his way back from Brindaban.'

— Dr. Mazumdar paraphrasing Krishnadas.

Adwaita-Prakash refers to the same occurrence also.

Sample 11.

'Gour Kripaay Sen Shibander nandan ।

Atibaalye sarbashastre hoila sfuran ॥

Kabikarnapur naame hoila tinha Khyata ।

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

English version :

Proficient in every subject through Gour's grace

Sibananda - son grew, whose sobriquet, Kabi

Karnapur, his fame displays.

—Adwaita-Prakash (A.P.)

Dr. Mazumdar mentions, without quoting, a similar account of Sibananda's son in Chaitanya Chritaamrita.

Sample 12.

The incidents such as disownment of Haridas (Jr.), demise of Haridas (Sr.), Sanatan's visit to Nilachal and growing scabies, sending Jagadananda to Nabadwip were, according to Dr. Mazumdar, first entered Krishnadas in his book. None of the well-known authors referred to any of these. But Ishan's book contains these also.

[All the four Samples mentioned at the end – those numbered 9 to 12 – occur nowhere in the standard texts that preceded Krishnadas's work. All these are special features of his book. Dr. Mazumdar has not investigated the issue of the alleged priority of Ishan over Krishnadas. He has rejected the hypothesis a priori to accuse Ishan of plagiarism whenever his work contains any of the special scoop-news given by Krishnadas. In course of translating Dr. Mazumdar's book several decades after it was first brought out, one has to be a whit particular about the historicity of old-timers' axiomatic hermeneutics. In particular, I have expressed well-meant doubt about the author's major premise which invariably insinuates plagiarism as the reason why Ishan provides many of the scoop-news items found in Krishnadas's book. With no known biodata of Ishan handy, one may not feel so confident to place him after Krishnadas in the chronological ordering of Sri Chaitanya biographers. I, for one, do not suppose that a man-Friday of Ishan's kind cannot ever write a book except by plagiarizing pastich of some or other illustrious writer. Ishan's bio-data remain an open question. Will scholar's attention be focussed thereon? I have been at pains all through my interpretation of Dr. Mazumdar's celebrated work to invite such attention. This will enhance the value of Dr. Mazumdar's unique research

whether some of his opinions of Ishan are to be emended or ratified thereby. As far as I am concerned, I am convinced that a much better work cannot deign to emulate another that is far worse, their dates of publication being irrelevant.]

The commotion of the name Gour used as an esoteric word or mantra:

Dr. Mazumdar's sceptic attitude to Ishan's genuineness or originality has some connection with the commotion centred round the use of the name, 'Gour' of Sri Chaitanya as a sacred hymn or mantra. Such a mantra (or esoteric word as people call it in English) is not just an acoustic phenomenon of Physics but a mystic power. The moment one repeats a mantra such as one's preceptor has recommended, some mystic force of supraphysical vibration tends to rend the veil of ignorance that stretches over one's work-a-day consciousness. The inner consciousness, aware per se of God, Soul and Spirit, is now opened. The mundane outlook changes into the spiritual. One turns into a devotee, a yogi or a selfless servant of the divine. Ordinarily, Vedic hymns or names of deities are regarded as mantras by the Hindu seekers.

In Ishan Nagar's 'Adwaita-Prakash', we see several allusions to Gour-mantra. It is widely believed that the word 'Gour' as the name of Sri Chaitanya has been heightened as a mantra since the time of Narahari Sarkar Thakur. The author has been told that the Thakurs of Srihatta have long been accustomed to the Gour-mantra. Some Thakurs of that region told the author of the custom being handed down from generation to generation.

A severe sectarian feud among the Vaishnabs was prevalent on the question of the independent worth or suzerainty of the Gour-mantra. The feud began to felt in the first moiety of the 19th century. But it was not altogether resolved as late as 1913

or 1914, when as a student of the third or the fourth class the author himself witnessed how it raised its head at a discussion-session at Nabadwip. The meeting was being held at a Vaishnab den called Akhra but the incivility shown to adversaries was a travesty of Vaishnabism or modesty as a conduct-code. The author remembered this awkward experience of Vaishnabs fighting each other with rods and sticks. A skirmish of this magnitude was never before witnessed by the author in Vaishnab circles, although he had subsequent experience of blows by rods being bandied between rivals of political workers committed to freedom fight. The enormity of the Vaishnab's conduct was all the more striking since the said discussion-session at Nabadwip was attended by Vaishnab Scholars from Brindaban, Puri and Kalna. The meeting naturally broke up within half an hour. Some Pundits met on the morrow to decide on the controversial issue. But the outcome of that meeting held at the 'house of golden Gouranga' is not so much as vivid in the author's memory.

At the time of the Sepoy Mutinee (1857 A.D.), Brindaban was in the grip of a serious agitation on this polemical Gour-mantra. The leading Vaishnabs of Brindaban issued a recipe or mandate at the time. (Vide Sri Chaitanyabodhini Patrika, Vol. I, PP. 260-66 (407 Chaitanyabda).

The wave of disturbance gradually spread from Brindaban to the entire Vaishnab Community of Gour (Bengal). The Vishnupria, a journal published from Bagbazar to espouse Gour-mantra was not the only of the kind. An opposite viewpoint was publicised by another journal, Sri Chaitanya-bodhini, which was published at Brindaban.

The journal, Vishnupriya, which was an advocate of Gour-mantra had Radhikanath Goswami for its editor. Radhikanath, who belonged the Advaita lineage, expressed his intention to cut off such link with a journal which might antagonize his old

friends. This intention was made explicit in his letter to Joygopal Mukhopadhyay of Brindaban. He even expressed his desire to write off his name as the editor of the Vishnupriya right after the return of Sisir Babu from Baidyanath.

The 'Srichaitanyamatabodhini', the journal that opposed tooth and nail the Pro-Gour-mantra standpoint of the Vishnupriya wrote in its issue 1,9 (407 Chaitanyabda) to the effect that the Gopal-mantra was the invariable hymn to worship the Gour image wherever there was one.

Nilmoni Goswami was the group-leader of Gour-mantra bashers. Nilmoni and other Goswamis, descended from Adwaita each, would next circulate a leaflet calling upon all concerned to abandon the Gour-mantra and accept the Gopal mantra instead as the obligatory mantra to worship Gouranga. The Chaitanyobodhini had its stock-in-trade in the alleged absence of Gour-mantra in any genuine scripture, the obvious conclusion of this premise being that any scripture advocating Gour-mantra must be a case of later interpolation or the product of a contrived text due to a modern zealot of Gour-mantra. The Goswamis' leaflet had less cognitive than conative meaning; it was a self-styled taboo on Gour-mantra. Gopal mantra, the leaflet warned, was mandatory. It was used by Iswarpuri during the initiation of Gour (Sri Chaitanya) himself. One Sitanath Pravui is made out to be the plenipotentiary power responsible for the descent of Sri Chaitanya. The circulated leaflet was duly signed by Vaishnab celebrities who were descended from Adwaita and who were mostly Shantipurbased. More leaflets with identical objective were circulated by other Vaishnab stalwarts.

The claim made by Achyut Tattwanidhi, who supported the Gour-mantra as a valid mantra and who invariably defends whatever is written in the 'Adwaita-Prakash', is discounted by Dr. Mazumdar. Achyut Tattwanidhi refers to the laborious

emendment made by Srinath Goswami, who brought a copy of the 'Adwaita-Prakash' for that purpose. Srinath Goswami is said to have procured a copy of the 'Adwaita-Prakash' from Laut. Dr. Mazumdar confutes everything Achyut claims for what the former believes to be the crucial argument of his confutation. And what is the argument? The argument, or the argument made out of the report that Goswamis of Srinath's native place, Uthalaa, were opposed to Gour-mantra. They recommended the Krishna-mantra. The anti-Gour-mantra plea of the said Goswamis of Uthala- also scions of Adwaita - was made known in an article published in the Chaitanyabodhini, 1, 9, P.206 (C.407Ch.)

The above citations 90 to refute, according to the author, the view that there were Adwaita scions or other Vaishnab celebrities who believed that Gouranga had an independent thinking of his own.

Still, pro-Gour group referred to religious texts like the 'Ishan-Samhita'. The Chaitanyamatabodhini dismissed stuff of this sort as a mushroom growth of fake scriptures. The motive of the patent propaganda against the tenability of the Gour-mantra was to disseminate the 'infallible view that whoever defends the Gour-mantra on the basis of some scriptural authority is merely citing some or other contrived scripture.' Dr. Mazumdar too keeps in abeyance any cross-examination of the accuser who sees nothing but manipulation or distortion in books that defend the Gour-mantra.

There is more to it. Dr. Mazumdar himself insinuates that 'Adwaita Prakash' is a cleverly - contrived work done at least four hundred years later than its admirers would say it was composed. A wonderful argument is advanced by the author in his own defence. The occurrence of the names of books like 'Ishan-Samhita' and 'Urdhamnaya-Samhita' its 'Proof proper' of the author's infallibility. He only needs two stupendous

assumptions. First, 'Adwaita-Prakash' was written to defend the Gour-mantra movement that was topical 4 centuries after the advent of Gour himself. Second, there can be no such thing as 'Ishan-Samhita' and such likes, which are mere figments of Gourists' brains. Of course, his conclusion is categorical despite the hypothetical nature of his (non-apodictic) assumptions. I wish to add that books written by hand are not to be found on the market. Even National Libraries may have no information about many esoteric texts which had little in them to induce common people to make numerous copies thereof. This extinction or near-extinction with a sole copy lying with some bibliophyle is no endemic ailment of Bengal. The world-famous Greek dramatist, Euripedes, wrote ninety plays of which no more than twelve are extant. It is a foregone conclusion of the author that Ishan is a deceptive pseudonym assumed by a modern Gourist.]

Yet Dr. Mazumdar quotes from Adwaita-Prakash the following speech made by Madhabendra Puri to Adwaita :

'Dharmasansthaapan hetu ei Kaliyuge ॥
Swaang bhagabaan prakat hoiben agre ॥
Ananta - Samhita taar saakshi srethatama ॥
Madhyastha Sri Bhagbat Bharat Aagama ॥

English version :

To set up Piety's rule in this atheist age
Lo, God Himself first incarnates.
Ananta Samhita bears its testimony true,
Intermediaries being Bhagbat and Mahabharat too.

The 'Adwaita-Prakash' also declaims in favour of the verity of Gour-mantra by way of mentioning it as the initiation mantra used by Adwaita for his disciple Jagannath and his wife, Sachi. The incident is described in the said text as follows :

Taba Sachidevi aasi Karilaa pranati ॥
Pravu kahe baachha tumi hao Putrabati ॥

Shuni mahaanande kahe Misra dwijaraaj ।
 Yaahe tua bakya rahe karo sei kaaj ॥
 Pravu kahe ek mantra paainu swapane ।
 Bhakti kori sei mantra laha duijane ॥
 Sarba amangal tabe abashya khandibe ।
 Param pandit dibya tanay lavibe ॥
 Aajna shuni aaila donhe kariaa sinane ।
 Tabe pravu Yathabidhi puji Naraayane ॥
 Donhaay mantra dilaa Sri Adwaitachandra ।
 Chaturakshar Gour-Gopal Mahamantra.

The gist of the quote in English :

Adwaita casually wishes a son to be born
 To Sachi, her spouse, Jagannath begs anon:
 'Make sure, Sir, your blessing bear fruit.—'
 So Adwaita gives Gour-Gopal mantra to each
 recruit.

[The author denies that anything of the kind occurred at all, since Murari Gupta and Brindabandas did not mention it. Neither was any hear-say current among Goswamis of the Adwaita lineage to suggest any such occurrence. The Chaitanyamatabodhini opined that the Gour-mantra cannot indulge filial-parental bond. The Gopal-mantra has been metamorphosed into Gour-Gopal mantra on the plea that the word 'hemava', which signifies 'the golden coloured' cannot apply to Balagopal because Balagopal was not fair-complexioned. Besides, many of Sri Chaitanya's entourage were Balagopal – worshippers. (Vide P.152 of the number 1,7 of the 407C, Vol. of the paper).

[The author himself reverses his lengthy declamation about the spuriousness of the 'Adwaita-Prakash', when at the fag end of his review he admits that he cannot be very sure that the book, in question, is spurious or that it bristles with interpolations. He wishes to know whether an old edition of the

book is at all available. But a modern critic would be amused at all this intellectual exercise to settle a controversy which is a priori nonexistent. The greatest opponents of the Gour-mantra, who denounced it from house top, had the curious habit of calling himself Krishnachaitanya. Either he is identical with Krishna or the word Krishna is not a nominal at all. If not, 'Krishna' would mean dark, sable or black. Then Krishnachaitanya would mean that Gour was of dark complexion. The latter consequence being belied by empirical evidence of his 'hemava' or golden complexion, we are to ask back – 'If Krishna and Chaitanya be identical, what on earth justifies a distinction between Krishna-mantra and Gour-mantra?'

The keen reader must have noticed that many authors – Krishnadas Kaviraj included – have willy - nilly 'damned by faint praise' one whom Bengal Vaishnabs by and large identify with Krishna. Authors like Krishnadas can only consider Sri Chaitanya a devotee, but not a variant, of Lord Krishna. Dr. Mazumdar subscribes to the view of Krishnadas's 'Charitamrita'. Chesterton, whom he quoted at the outset of his bulky work, would perhaps find the kind of revulsion in him that characterized Matthew Arnold's life of Saint Francis. All the arguments marshalled by Dr. Sen against the authenticity, and even the genuineness, of the 'Adwaita-Prakash' are in the nature of the regressive reasoning so as to arrive at the lukewarm attitude to Sri Chaitanya's Avatarhood. Some Brindaban-based authors did not even end up with a courteous curtsy to Lord Chaitanya while they would conclude his biography.

There are legends on Avatar – many of them in Sanskrit. Krishnadas Kaviraj is certainly bogged down to the unfounded fancy – tales about Avatars. He had not the opportunity to come across books written by Sri Aurobindo on this mystic

issue. Avatarhood is a continual process. Even Krishna cannot be the last word of Avatarhood. The evolutionary cross-roads are the temporal thresholds of Avatars' advents. God is born in a human garb to prepare new staircases in the occult domain for future Sadhaks to ascend and cross them into unattained Peaks of consciousness. He also prepares the external consciousness— individual and collective so that the new truth embodied by Him may find some vehicles to express itself through. No poet – even when he writes the sacred Sanskrit poem – can dictate God: 'Well, Mr. God, don't come back – we have Krishna for our last Avatar.'

Avatarhood is a science and an art. It is not in a static sloka written in Sanskrit that one may find its foundation and frontiers. As long as Nature herself is in travail to release the higher and still higher forms of truth and bliss, there must continue a procession of divine births. So it is quite plausible that Sri Chaitanya was an Avatar and a part and parcel of Krishna for that matter. The conflict between Gour-mantra and Krishna-mantra loses, ipso facto, its rationale. In the last analysis, Krishnadas, the Brindaban Goswamis of all sorts and Dr. Mazumdar have a thing about Sri Chaitanya's Avatarhood. The outcry against Gour-mantra and the insinuation of spuriousness against 'Adwaita-Prakash' are the two faces of that one Figure – a figure of one who praises something for its superficial features lest people should appreciate it in its essentials. Those Brindaban Goswamis and Krishnadas Kaviraj depicted Gouranga's scholarship and devotion to the divine in detail so as best to shute his own divinity from the public eye. A manichean mixture is often unavoidable even when one tries to adore a God-Incarnate.

Haricharandas's 'Adwaitamangal'

Rasikchandra Basu introduced Haricharandas's 'Adwaitamangal' (henceforth called AM) to the reading public

in 1303 B.S. He wrote about the book in the Sahitya-Parishat Patrika of that year (vide No. 3-4 thereof). Rasik's article was based on a copy of 'AM' dating 1791 A.D. From the coincidence of the date, namely, 1713 Sh. i.e. 1791 A.D., of the Sahitya-Parishat copy numbered 266, the author assumes that Rasik might have used the identical copy.

Prof. Sukumar Sen, writing for the 'Bangasree' in 1341 B.S. quoted from the 'Danlila' part of the book and wished to see it in print. He seems to have no information of the first part of the book having been printed already by Brajasundar Sanyal of Rajshahi; it was published in 1308 B.S. by Gurudas Chattopadhyay of 201, Cornwallis Street. The author had collected the first part but did not know whether Mr. Sanyal had arranged to publish the other parts of the book. The edition, in question did not publicize the author's name. By means of collation, however, the author could be sure that the copy of the book as preserved in the Sahitya-Parishat Library and the one Published in part by Mr. Sanyal must be identical. So it was Haricharandas's book that Mr. Sanyal had Published, the author's name being seen in the Sahitya-Parishat copy. In the book 'Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita' by Krishnadas Kaviraj there is a reference to one devotee named Haridas in its chapter on 'Adwaitashaakhaa'.

The opening section ceremonially justifies the composition of the book in the wonted manner of Vaishnab Writers' Foreword. It goes like –

Srigurucharan Padma

Manete Kariaa Satya

Je lekhaay Parashmoni moke ॥

Krishner jibanpran

Premmukti jaar naam

Ajnaa maagi taanhaar Srimukhe ॥

Taanhar je kripaa bare

Purbaapar dekhaay more

Ajnaa anusaare matra dekhi ॥

— P. 23, Book in Print.

Pravur nandan aar shishyaadi sakale १
Aamare ajnaa dila hriday-prabale ॥
Aami Pravur vritya taanhaar aajnaabale १
Sahas kariaa likhi Sricharan bale ॥
Bande Sri Achyutananda Pravur tanay १
Balaram Krishna Misra aar jata hoy ॥
Tomaar aajnaay likhi jatan Kariaa १

The Foreword : first version [Abridged]

My master's magic force promotes my verse –

I do the bidding of one who does in Krishna merge.
The ordering of the book is at his command,
My thanks are due to Achyut and his disciples' band.

The Foreword : second version [Abridged]

In my heart of hearts I received
The fiat of Master's son and devotees that wished
I wrote like this – this daring feat
Is by their blessings alone fulfilled.

The overdoing of the reference to command, fiat or bidding as one may like to employ for the synonym of 'aajnaa', is apt cause suspicion about the earnestness of the writer. The author also gives a list of topics he has dealt with in his book, to wit,

'Pratham sankhyaay hoy gurbadi barnan १
Kṛishna lila anukram bastu nirupan ॥
Dwitiya Sankhyaay panch abasthaar sutra १
Bijoypuri aagaman param charitra ॥
Tritiya Sankhyaay Bijoypuri sambaad १
Sri Bhagbat artha pravur aaswaad ॥
Preme gadagada Puri Durbaasaa Sakshaat १
Madhabendra satirtha hoy ie bikhyaat ॥'

etc. etc.

English version :

The first number's on the Master et cetera,
And on judging things in terms of Krishnalila.
The five stages' and also the advent
Of noble Bijoypuri are next related.
In the third number 'd occur
Master's Bhagbat grasping and the encounter
With love-merged Puri of Durbaasaa mien
And famed being Madhabendra's fellow-disciple again.

What were the five stages as mentioned above? These were, the writer says, the five phases of the Adwaitalila. [Incidentally, this abuse of the term 'lila' is nothing peculiar to Haricharan. 'Lila' in the sense of any act, even the amorous, has been a vogue word with Vaishnav poets. I feel I should clarify the true sense of the term. This is a mystic notion of the creative act of the Ineffable One to be immanent in the Many. Maya in Shankara's sense of illusion fails to explain why a kind and wise God should at all deceive man – including Shankara – by an illusory world. The Lila notion of the manifested world redeems both God and the world of the maze created by Shankara. God is likened to an eternal child engaged in an eternal play of one becoming the Many and the Many inhering the one and even becoming the one through evolutionary transformations. A real Lila cannot produce an illusory world. Only it is half-sealed from its innermost self which is not the world-play but the player, so that essentially the world-life is a play where God Himself is the play, the playground and the player. Let me hope that Haricharan's Adwaitalila will not be confused with the Divine Lila, at least hereafter.]

Let us reproduce the five stages of Adwaita's development as given by Haricharan. He describes them in the second chapter or section of his book. His verse goes as follows:

Balyaabasthaate hoy janmalila aadi ॥
 Pratham abasthaa bali sarba karya saadhi ॥
 Pouganda abasthaate shantipur aaila ॥
 Dwitiya abasthaa boli barnana hoila ॥
 Kaishore abasthaate tirtha parjyatan ॥
 Brindaban aagaman Gopal prakattan ॥
 Bhaktishastra byaakhyaa digbijayee jay ॥
 Adwaitanath Prakat taahaatei hoy. ॥

These platitudes about Adwaita may apply to anyone else of those days, the only peculiarity being his debating victory over

a so-called pundit who defeated all he met. [I need not perhaps go for its complete translation in verse. I try an English version of the eight lines of the quoted doggerel.]

English version :

Having finished the wonted round
Of early years, he was found
In Shantipur where his preadolescent days
Go to map out his life's second phase.
Juvenile years mean pilgrimage
Brindaban unveiling Gopal's visage.
Prevailing over a formidable pundit
In debate, Adwaita earns rasping plaudit.

The same stereotype of an average Bengalee middle class life is depicted for the latter part of Adwaita's career. His Sadhana is mentioned but its distinctive form not indicated. Henceforth Adwaita is described as a sanctified one. A contact with this man of piety was piety itself. The final phase is rather unusual. Adwaita, now advanced in age and wisdom marries Sita.

'Adwaitamangal' covers the period from Chaitanya's birth to adoption of monkhood and his water-sport at Adwaita's. It also describes the performance of the 'Danlila' Act also.

The all-important question is : was he or was he not contemporaneous with the events of Sri Chaitanya's life that occur in his book? Let us note the following points, at issue:

1. Haricharan speaks of Nityananda having been blessed at birth by Adwaita. Harai Pandit took Adwaita to Ekchaka for the purpose. Brindabandas, the putative authority on Nityananda does not refer to any such strange incident. [Dr. Mazumdar considers it very unlikely that Brindabandas would not note it if it actually occurred.]

2. The Adwaitamangal version of Nityananda's tour of holy places after the death of his parents is like what follows:

'Balya, pouganda Kaishor abasthaa ॥
 Matapita antardhan rahe jathaa tathaa ॥
 Uddharan Datta hoy sakhaa antaranga ॥
 Taahaare loiaa tirtha kare ॥

English version :

From childhood days to adolescence
 Shelterless and bereft of both parents
 Puts up anywhere, and then wends
 His way to holy places at friend Uddharan's
 instance.

P.S. Note that the omitted word 'pouganda' or preadolescence is encompassed by the period mentioned.

This report tends to nail to the counter – whether rightly or wrongly – the following account of Nityananda's early days as given in Brindabandas's 'Chaitanya Bhagabat'. A monk hosted by Haaraai took Nityananda with him as he left. The event is described by Brindabandas as follows :

'Nityananda gele matra Haaraai Pandit ॥
 Bhumite parilaa bipra hoiaa murchhit ॥
 Tin maas naa karila anner grahan ॥
 Chaitanya - Pravabe sabe rahila jiban ॥

English version :

Nityananda departing, Haaraai fell into a fainting fit—
 For three months thence he did not eat.
 It was Chaitanya's feat that he still survived.

[The author, Dr. Mazumdar is, as always, eager to reject anything not included in famous texts. A modern reader, who has known of verifiability criterion of meaning and who does not believe that one can survive even after fasting for three months, would not agree with the author. Even Sri Chaitanya's grace cannot keep one alive without food for ninety days or more. The body of Haaraai Pandit was a part of the ignorant

nature or Aparā Prakṛiti. No sadhak of his age had the slightest notion of the divinisation of the cellular consciousness. Even an advanced sadhak has his nature - part steeped in ignorance. No grace can be received in the ignorant body-part even when the vital and the mental parts have some opening to the Higher Force. Fasting for so long must mean death for that matter.

I entirely reject Brindābandas's legend. Haricharan may not be authentic. But disagreement with a palpable falsehood is no ground for considering his report false. There is one more absurd claim in 'Chaitanya Bhagbat'. Haaraai being the patron and mentor of Nityananda, he is not likely to have let a visitor snatch his protegee as reported. Brindābandas's report is absurd at either remove. It is time that more scientific probe was applied to these putatively authentic biographies of Lord Chaitanya whose life itself is pure and charming as lily. Let none paint the lily as Brindāban does.]

3. Murari Gupta speaks of eight daughters of Sachi none of whom survived till the birth of Biswarup. Biswambhar (Sri Chaitanya) was thus the tenth issue of his parents on Murari's reckoning. A similar report is found in the book by Kabi Karnapur also. But 'Adwaitamangal' declaims chaitanya's congruousness to Krishna even in this matter. In fact, Lord Krishna has been said to be the eighth issue of his parents. Haricharan alone writes to say that Biswambhar too was the eighth issue. According to Haricharan's 'Adwaitamangal' the six deceased children were all males – a claim that contravenes other writers' assertion in more than one respect. Let us reproduce Haricharan's own words here in so far as they bear on the polemics :

'Nanda – Jashodaar Prakaash Sachi – Jagannath १
Srihatta deshe janma patni putra saat ॥
Chhay putra hoila marila Krame Krame १'

English version :

Sachi – Jagannath as Nanda – Joshodaa's vicarious presence
 Have in Srihatta their family residence.
 Each son is born to die – the same
 Successively happens to all six of them.

Haricharan triggers off a fresh bout of debate as he declares that Biswarup had already left homestead as a monk when Biswambhar (Sri Chaitanya) was born.

Haricharan attributes the birth of Biswambhar to the blessings of Adwaita whom the bereaved parents met to seek solace. It was on his own that Adwaita blessed the suppliant couple to the effect. Haricharan's report is very clear about the 'miracle - man' proffering to bless them as above. Let us quote the relevant lines from 'Adwaitamangal' that bear on the issue :

'Pravu kahe dukkha-shok aar naa kariha ॥
 Krishner ichchhaate sab emati jaaniya ॥
 Tomaake diba ek putra hoy chatmatkar ॥
 Saptadin baas etha karaha angikaar ॥

English version :

The Master says, 'Dismay no more –
 Krishna's will ordains everything for sure.
 A wonder son to you'd be born as my gift
 Provided you deign to stay here a week forthwith.

The belief based on Murari's book is at variance with Haricharan's view of things. Biswambhar is said to have consoled his parents when monk Biswarup renounces home. (Vide Murari's Karcha, 1, 7, 9). This is ratified by Kabi Karnapur also. (Vide his Epic, 2, 105). In Brindaban's book there is a reference to Biswambhar visiting Adwaita's place to call Biswarup back home, and a mention of the younger brother fainting off at the adoption of monkhood by the elder.

[The author would not give credence to epigones' writing in any case unless that conforms to standard works. The fanfare round Adwaita is, according to the author, a ploy to bring Adwaita to the centre-stage of the religious drama of the day.]

There is yet another miracle-lore in 'Adwaitamangal'. [Before reproducing it, I would prefix a note to all such miracle mongering. First, miracles are less frequent than hear-says suggest. What is a miracle? A yogi who projects the dynamical laws of a higher occult plane onto our mundane plane performs a miracle. For example, a teen-aged French girl, Mirra Alfasso, who was a spiritual worker already, once fell down a pit 300 feet deep. She was playing with other girls. If our physical plane did not change its dynamical law by the projection of a higher dynamical law (native to some higher occult plane), Mirra would have been smashed. She really had no injury because her yogic ability to pull an upward - directed force made her almost weightless so as to allow a soft alighting on the ground.] It is not always the case, however, that a vital occult power shall act, per se to change the physical circumstance. Often some material medium such as a leaf, a flower, an amulet may be required to convey and deliver the higher force. Particularly, totemism of a sort is in vogue among inferior occultists and black magicians. Haricharan's reported 'basil leaf' is some such totem. This leaf allegedly came floating through Ghaga waters. It started its watery journey from Brindaban and reached Shantipur in Bengal. Adwaita by his clarion call in stentorian voice forced some basil leaf on the above locus. Sita and Sachi ate of the leaf sanctified and transmogrified by Adwaita's spiritual power into a medicine to cure sterility, miscarriage-tendency and all the ills that gynaetrics treats of and gynaecologists treat.

[I disbelieve the story of the Brindaban-Shantipur journey of the leaf as much as I disbelieve that I have six eyes. Dr.

Mazumdar finds no interest in spiritual matters. He perhaps hates even contradict miracle-stories. His materialistic disposition is antipodal to spirituality. But Sri Chaitanya, our cynosure of a sort, is a spiritual being and nothing else. That is why I have to fill in the gaps left by Dr. Mazumdar. I believe that true spirituality is more infallible than Physics – let alone the pseudosciences. But most (reputedly) spirituals we come across are anything but the real Mackay. They are either impostors or tyros making tall claims to occult power. Adwaita has been so brazenly hyped by his admirers that one would not believe the little occult power that he might really possess. Particularly, Haricharan has defeated his own cause saying that Adwaita roared for seven days to bring the basil leaf down to Shantipur. All sorts of seance and occult acts are noiseless. Haricharan is confusing a Yogi with a burning-ghat Kapalik!]

4. None can have three dates of birth. Lo and behold, Adwaita's son has the privilege of being born in 1485 A.D., 1491 A.D. and C.1503 A.D. according to Haricharan, Ishan Nagar and Brindabandas respectively. Brindabandas did not care about dates himself. But one can adduce dates from his writing nevertheless. Curiously, Ishan and Haricharan are equally eager to establish fiction as fact, as Dr. Mazumdar contends. But all their eagerness is there for the sake of Adwaita's apotheosis. Despite a common cause these two writers have given different birth-dates of their demi-God's son. Dr. Mazumdar has indeed reason to question the authenticity of such stuff. The egregious follies of such books indicate that they were not written by Adwaita's contemporaries. The fake claim of oldness is a hunt for respectability.

5. The 'Adwaitamangal' account of Nemaï sucking after and only after his mother took the Krishna-mantra from Adwaita is again at variance with another Adwaita-worshipper Ishan's report as found in the 'Adwaita-Prakash'. According to the

latter, Sachi was given the Krishna-mantra by her preceptor, Adwaita, before she conceived. So it was before Nemaï's birth that the said mantra was given her. The following distich from Ishan highlights the anomaly between the two Adwaita - adulators :

'Donhaakaare mantra dila Sri Adwaita Chandra १

Chaturaakshar Sri Gour Gopal mahamantra ॥'

The couplet in Bengali means

'Both by Adwaita are now initiated -

The great Gour-Gopal mantra is the one they get.'

[While according to Haricharan, there was a finite time - interval, however small, when there was a baby called Nemaï, who refused to suck mother's breast-milk because she did not till then cant Krishna-mantra, Ishan says the mother was in the habit of incantation of the selfsame mantra even before the baby was born. A very objective form of time-translation unknown to Physics may judge both reports correct. But in such a Lewis Carroll space you may start for place today and hope to reach there yesterday. In other words, all this is legend. A baby never behaves in the manner of a devotee of a special divinity-like Krishna. I agree with the author on this point as I share his feeling that these inconsistencies resulted from the zealous adulation of Adwaita. If I write a book according to a preconceived notion, I am apt to ignore or distort any fact that does not support my view-point. This must involve me in inconsistencies with more factually - motivated writers. This is how Haricharan is so widely divergent from any faithful biographer of Lord Chaitanya.]

Apart from the above inconsistency between two admirers of Adwaita, there is a strong case either, which bears the authority of one of Brindabandas's respectability. The author, Dr. Mazumdar regards Brindabandas's 'Chaitanya Bhagbat' as

the paradigm of biographical works as far as the Nabadwip phase of Sri Chaitanya's life is concerned. Now Brindabandas's book would raise grave doubt about the very fact of Sachi's initiation by Adwaita. It is no question of when she was initiated but one of whether she was at all. The following quote from 'Chaitanya Bhagbat' seems to confute the argument in favour of that initiation :

'Je aair charandhulir aami patra १

Se aair provab naa jana tilmatro ॥

That quote means that Adwaita himself remarks :

Of her power you may know no bit –

But my worth's no more that of dust in her feet.

No preceptor would speak of his disciple in a manner like this which not only heightens the latter but also belittles the former to a point of object insignificance. If Brindaban be true, the story of Sachi's discipleship to Adwaita must be false. [But we cannot be very sure in these matters for the simple reason of our ignorance of these happenings of the 15th century.]

6. Achyut is made out to be Sita's disciple by Haricharan. Kabim Karnapur in his 'Gour ganoddeshdipika' declares that he was a disciple of Srimat Pandit Goswami. Srijib also holds the same opinion. Possibly, Haricharan intends to raise Sita's image by the report that it was she who acted as Achyut's preceptor, as the author feels.

7. The report found in the 'Adwaitamangal' by Haricharan that after initiation to monkhood Sri Chaitanya came to Shantipur and participated in the dramatic performance of 'Daanlila' seems to the author improbable. Sri Chaitanya at the time was in no mood to indulge such levity. The biographers of Sri Chaitanya such as Murari, Shibananda and Basu Ghosh have not referred to the incident either.

8. According to 'Adwaita Prakash', Adwaita was born 52 years before Sri Chaitanya's physical birth. But the

'Adwaitamangal' speaks of a fantastic seven centuries, time - lag between the two events-let us quote from 'Adwaita Prakash' the relevant couplet,

'Saat shato batsar Mahapravur aage 1

Adwaita Acharya Pravu prakat ei yuge ॥

The quote means,

First Adwaita's advent takes place -

Mahapravu is born 700 years hence.

If we take 'saat' as a variant of 'soa' i.e., if seven be taken to mean one and a fourth, well, even so, Haricharan would make Adwaita some 73 years older than he is to be according to Ishan's reckoning. [Can one live 7 or 8 hundred years? If it be a hyperbole of prosody, it would be apter in a science fiction on Chemical Elixir of Life. A biography ought to have some of the good feature of a history text.]

The 'Adwaita mangal' would be somewhat readable if it contained an account of the activities of Adwaita and Sita as preachers of the doctrine of spiritual love in the absence of Mahapravu i.e., during his stay at Nilachal. It is a pity there is nothing of the kind in this book, which according to the author, cannot be more than 250 years old at the time of his writing around 1920s. [The object of Haricharan was to show off some incredible powers of Adwaita. Predilection has taken its toll. Haricharan has frantically spun webs of Adwaita's miraculous spiritual power. The trouble with Haricharan is that he has no sense of proportion. Neither does he understand what spirituality consists in. A miracle - maker may be a spiritual tyro. Great saints seldom perform miracles. No saint worth the name shows off his preternatural power in any case. I end up the section with a curt remark — the higher a biography — matter, the more numerous the biographers of lower acumen. We have to resign ourselves to such distorted versions of a

Supernal Life that is not to be sullied by a motivated propaganda. Lord Chaitanya remains what he is – God in human visage!]

Lauria Krishnadas's 'Balyalila-Sutram'

Achyut Tattwanidhi published this book in 1915-16, which also contained the translation in Bengali in a verse form. Achyut himself did the translation. He states in the preface to this edition that it was in its original form lying with one Brahmin of Laur. Srinath Goswami of the Adwaita lineage happened to come by this work in course of his tour of Laur. He showed it round to his brother Madhusudan and also to two scholars of Shantipur and Pabna. The Shantipur - based expert of ancient literature and religious texts was Madangopal Goswami, a celebrity of his day. The Pundit of Pabna, Muralimohan Goswami, was well-versed in these subjects also.

The book, which was procured was tainted by errors. May be, it was the work of one who was not well up in Sanskrit. The scholars mentioned above corrected the slipshod writing to a considerable extent. The corrections were made during the perusal of the manuscript. Muralimohan of Pabna made a (corrected) copy of it. Achyut's publication and Murali's copy are indetical in content. But significant variations were introduced during its 'coping' by different persons. We would see later on how one verse gave rise to variant readings during such 'transcriptions'.

It was Dr. Dinesh Sen, who first mentioned this book in his work 'Bengali Language and Literature' in its first edition of 1896. Years later, in 1924, the author Dr. Mazumdar happened to become sceptical about its authenticity. So he began his investigations into its true value, in course of which he met Rakhal Das Bandyopadhyay, Amulyacharan Vidyabhusan, Nagendranath Bose and also Muralimohan Goswami of Uthali.

As a result of this investigation his doubt became even graver. His article expressing his feeling was published in the *Bangabani* edited by Bijoy Mazumdar. The article was to question the authenticity of the book and the author's view was supported by various data of documentary worth. Dr. Nolinikanta Bhattacharya wrote an article in the next issue of the *Bangabani*, where the author's article was criticized in respect of its historical observations. But, neither Achyut Babu nor anyone else has till the writing of the present book written at all in defence of the authenticity of the book, in question.

The author has advanced a number of reasons for his doubt in the genuineness or authenticity of the book, '*Balyalila-Sutram*'. These are:

1. It is claimed by means of a verse-line of the book itself that it was composed just two years after the birth of Sri Chaitanya (vide 8138, *Balyalila-Sutram*). So the date of composition of the book comes to 1487 A. D. As the author came to learn from Amulyacharan Vidyabhusan that the latter had seen a copy of the book in the possession of Muralimohan Goswami of Pabna, he (author) arranged to get its four couplets through the good offices of Amulyacharan Vidyabhusan who provided them. These couplets described 'the ascent to the throne' of Raja Ganesh.

[The couplets are of little intrinsic value. It harps on the same chord of the many-sided attainments of the Raja. It speaks of his versatile learning and flatters him as the protector of Gour and as the Valiant Victor of non-Hindu adversaries.]

The point of interest is elsewhere— not at all in the adulation of Ganesh as expressed by the couplets. Research interest in this drab specimen of poetry stems from its variant readings. The published book widely diverges from the copy due to Vidyabhusan. The author, Dr. Mazumdar, remarks that the form in print differs from the manuscript in order to extol the glory

of the Advaita lineage. There is no end to the confusion that this inconsequential book in its various forms can produce. In fact, Provaschandra Sen as inserted in a foot-note of his book, 'Bagurar Itihas' (i.e. History of Bogra) the above couplets. Again, there is disagreement between the previously mentioned ones and Provas Sen's foot-note. Thus for example the printed book in its second couplet eulogizes Ganesh while in the said foot-note it is Nariaal on whom a fulsome flattery is showered.

The historical study of Ganesh is relevant, no doubt. [But the reader will be amused to see how three historians have always as many independent theories, each more confident of its truth than any other. No wonder, history is said to be 'an eye-witness account of something that never happened by one who was not there.']

Here we have three historians (and, of course, three different theories). One of them—Ferista—avers, 'Ganesh's reign was from 1386 to 1392 A.D.' The tenure is, however, from 1385 to 1392 A.D. according to Riazus Salatin. Blockman has a tertium quid to offer. His dates are 1407 and 1414 A.D. for the beginning and the end of Ganesh's reign. Historian-cum-archaeologist, Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay (of Mohenjodaro fame) does not recognize any degree of sovereignty to be regarded as a 'king' that Ganesh Possessed. He holds the view and it was Samsuddin II who was the Sultan from 1406 to 1409 A.D. One iconologist also revelled in fishing in troubled waters and came forward with such a striking theory that one would almost say, 'Regarding originatlity the previous theory is not a patch on it.' This theorist is Nolini Bhattachali who says, 'None that existed was Samsuddin II.' [It's a treat to fall between two stools when one writer says, 'Samsuddin II had the whip hand and not Ganesh' and another says, 'Samsuddin II existed no more than a round square.' (The golden mean of Aristotle would be to believe that Ganesh was a Raja, and no king, and was in power for seven years or so sometime between the late

14th and the early 15th centuries.)) Nolini Bhattachali advances a peculiar theory that Ganesh was the 'King' from 1414-18 A.D., besides being the virtual king for a couple of years that preceded his formal reign.

Blockman's Year-mark 1407 A.D. for Ganesh's installation as 'King' curiously coincides with the date given in 'Balyalila-Sutram.' Dr. Mazumder remarks that it must be an interpolation executed by someone who knew of Blockman's 1873 article in the J. A. S. B. that adds some irrelevant historical data on Ganesh's reign. Where, the author Dr. Mazumdar, would ask, is a pertinence of Gopal's annals to Advaita's boyhood?

2. It is 'revealed' that the 'Balyalila-Sutra' was composed only two years after Sri Chaitanya's advent. [Note that, 'Sutram' of the Sanskrit original is 'Sutra' in the Bengali version of the book, in question.] curiously, the book speaks of the divinity of Sri Chaitanya and Vindicates that contention by an address to authoritative scriptural texts. The sanskrit original has the following to say about Sri Chaitnya when he was two years of age as per Krishnadas's own declaration.

'Nabadwipe Sachigarve jhobtirnah purandaraat
Matpravoh siddhamantrenaakrishtah san jibannuktaye !
Bande Sri Gour Gopalang Haring tang premsaharang
Anantasamhita granthe janmahattwang subarnitam.'

The above quote in Sanskrit purports to

Into Sachi's womb descends the Lord
As pulled by liberated Master's esoteric word.
My obeisance to Gour of love unbound;
Anantasamhita - verses with his glories resound.

By 'Master' is meant 'my Master' i.e., the master of the writer of the book 'Balyalila-Sutram'. Advaita was this master of the writer, Krishnadas. The Paradox of the text is that the writer's Master, Advaita, himself did not realize Gour's divinity till after he considered the pros and the cons of the contention that

Gour is a God-incarnate. When Advaita was engaged in such deliberation, Gour was a young man, and no teen-ager or a child. If Krishnadas's Guru could not divine Gour's Avatarhood in the childhood days of Gour, is it possible that his disciple, Krishnadas, could divine his divinity when he was a child of two? The dubious testimony of the 'Ananta Samhita' won't tilt the balance in Krishnadas's favour. The explosive revelation that the 'Ananta - Samhita' contained the names of twelve pro-Nityananda chiefs, who only rose to prominence within their faction after the demise of Sri Chaitanya, gives a lie to the claim made by Krishnadas. In fact, the above revelation made by Dr. Mazumdar is really something that calls to question the veracity of the writer, Krishnadas, and causes one's umbrage by his unabashed distortion of facts about an emblem of Truth – Sri Chaitanya.

An indirect evidence of the spuriousness of 'Balyalila-Sutram' is the absence of Sri Jib's or Krishnadas Kaviraj's allusion to any ancient text predicting the advent of Sri Chaitanya as an Avatar. But Sri Jib, Krishnadas Kaviraj and Baladeb Vidyabhusan were masters each of scriptures and sacred texts. If Sri Chaitanya's advent was prophesied in any of these, these erudite scholars would not rest content with a none-too-transparent reference to it as given in the Mahabharat and the Bhagbat.

The books, 'Advaita-Prakash' and 'Prembilas' refer to 'Balyalila-Sutram'. But these two books are suspect in the eye of the author, who, therefore, takes no cognizance of what these books contain. [The author's view of Advaita-Prakash may not be a truism. But his rejection of the testimony-value of this book is not incoherent as far as his own system of thought is concerned. Even a law-court heeds no witness of questionable veracity, as we know.]

Achyut Babu's opinion that Dibyasinha, the Raja of Laur, took to asceticism under Advaita's guidance and composed

1441 A.D. Since the author has given his new name of Krishnadas which became his life's workhood. The detailed allusion to family lineage with all its ramifications is unlikely to be the point of interest of a monk. Excepting the 24th 'bilas' (expression or distich) or 't' anabilas' there is no precedent to such family-mindedness or such accent on the family-tree as far as the Vaishnab literary history is concerned. The genealogy given here does not agree with the compilation of Mr. Nag or even with 'Bange Bhishan'. If Mr. Nag be trusted, Adwaita's year of birth cannot be 1434 A.D. The author, Dr. Mazumdar does not trust this book at all for these reasons. He does not even believe it to be half so old an work as it is claimed to be.

Sitaguna Kadamba :

Prof. Amulyacharan Ghosh Vidyabhusan procured the book, 'Sitagun Kadamba' for the sake of the author, Dr. Mazumdar. It was an unpublished and hitherto unknown book in manuscript, whereof a portion was copied by the author, in duplicate, the second copy being kept with the Sahitya Parishad Library. The original was duly returned to its owner. There is the date-lable, 1789 A.D., at the end of the manuscript whose place of composition is declared to be Durgapur. When in 1936 the author had a glimpse of it, it appeared to be as old as its date-lable would indicate. The condition of the paper as also that of the handwritten content would not be what they were if it had not been some 147 years old really. The signatory, Gorachandra Debsharma, would seem to be the author, since the signature and the date-lable marked the closure of the manuscript. But the true author was one Vishnudas. The text itself has the concluding lines,

'Binaamulye bikaainu Achyut charae ॥
 Vaishnaber padadhuli kariaa bhushane ॥
 Sita Sahit Adwaiter Pada padma aash ॥
 Sitaguna Kadamba rachila Vishnudas ॥

The lines declare the author of 'Suguna Kadamu' as one Vishnudas. The verse lines in Bengali are as follows signify.

I, Vishnucharan, offer to Achyut this book gratis;
Sita-Adwaita's lotus feet are my heart's wish.

Vishnudas relates his whereabouts also :

'Bishnupure Madhabendra Acharya May
Buddhihin murha aami taahaar tanay
Kulia nikatete Bishnupur graam .
Purbe sapta muni jaanhaa karilaa bistam .

English version :

A dolt, I'm a son of Madhabendra of Bishnupur village
(off Kulia), where once had rested seven sages.

The writer, Vishnucharan, means to say that the book is an eye-witness account of the life and action of Sita and Adwaita. It is related that a Brahmin called Gobinda had found Sita in a forest, full of flowers. One day when Sita had come to the Ganga (Ganges) for a bath, she was met by Adwaita. They felt drawn to each other at the first sight. The writer, Vishnudas, himself went to Gobinda's place and proposed their marriage. On page 3 of this book occurs the couplet to the effect :

'Seidin gelaam aami Gobinder ghare t
Debir bibaaha laagi Kahilaam taare u'

These lines in Bengali signify.

That I made for Gobinda's place
And I proposed Debi's marriage.

(The word, debi, is used for respectful address to a lady. Here it is used absolutely as a polite reference to the lady, in question). Adwaita had six sons by Sita. There is no unanimity between Krishnadas Kaviraj and Vishnudas regarding the name of the sixth son.

The birth-hour of Sri Chaitanya as given by Vishnudas is precisely the same as Biswanath Chakraborty avers. On page

10 of the book due to Vishnudas there is a mention of the fact that Bishwambhar took lessons in the Bhagbat from Adwaita. [But the writer, Vishnucharan has the conviction that the reader must repeatedly be exposed to episodes which speak volumes for Sita's power of miraculous nature to everyone of credulous nature. So even the fact of unique historical significance – the advent-hour of Lord Chaitanya – has been made an opportune occasion for reminding the credulous reader of the preternatural glory of Sita who exclaimed,

'Aami aaji dekhite paaiba Chaitanyacharan.'

Since this quote from P.6 of the book signifies,

'This day Chaitanya's feet shall my eyes greet.'

Vishnudas means to suggest that Bishwambhar's name to be assumed 24 years after the day, in question is glibly uttered by Sita. And Charan or Feet of a new-born attract her as we are told. How can she be so reverent to a new-born unless she divines its divinity?

.Sometimes all three of them who form the cream of the Adwaita family are shown for what they 'are' – beings of superhuman power. The following incident is described in that spirit of deifying each.

Vishnudas writes (vide P. 11 loc. cit) that one day when Sita had gone to take her bath, Bishwambhar was inside, reading with Adwaita. Achyut on the spur of the moment made a devotional offering of a glass of milk to Bishwambhar and drank it himself. There is, however, no explicit indication that Achyut in his childish urge had drunk some milk meant for Bishwambhar. In any case, Sita, on returning, would swat him and the mark of that slap would appear on Biswhambhar's person. [The legend of a cocktail of milk, slap and transmigration of mark is amusing, no doubt, such an incident really belongs to the life of Lord Ramkrishna whose person bore mark of injury when someone else was given a hard blow.

The question I would ask is : Was Sita Lord Ramkrishna's compeer or the whole story is an interpolation by one who read of the latter incident in the famous Chronicle, Kathaamrita?]

Vishnudas's 'Sitaguna Kadamba' tries, as does 'Sitacharitra' to create the impression that Ishan Nagar who wrote 'Adwaita-Prakash' is none other than the Ishan of Chaitanyabhagbat. And Ishan Nagar is but one servitor of Sachi for all that – a 'fact' intended to help the reader to estimate Sita's greatness. But an intention of such sublime type must be manifest in a sublime verse-form such as

Ishan Adwaita pada kariaa bandan ।
 Sachir mandire tabe dilaa darashan ॥
 Sachi kahe kotha hoite aailaa kibaa naam ।
 Ishan kahe ghar mor Shantipur dham ॥

English version :

Worshipping Adwaita's feet
 Ishan goes to meet
 Sachi who asks his locale and name
 'Ahsantipur's local', Ishan replies to the same.

Ishan Nagar states in his book, 'Adwaita-Prakash' that he was asked by Sita to marry when he was seventy. Ishan adds that he did her bidding and preserved his lineage, and went over to Laur where he composed his book. Achyut Babu in his preface to 'Adwaita-Prakash' writes that after the downfall of the 'kingdom' of laur owing to the barbarous Khasia tribals in 1744, Ishan's descendants settled at the village, Jhatpal, off Goalanda. But Vishnudas in his 'Sitakadamba' has an entirely story to explain the above. He says that Ishan himself had shifted to Jhatpal, which, naturally preceded by a long chalk the Khasia episode. This was done by Ishan in pursuance of Sita's bidding – so goes Vishnudas's account. [In fact, two dogmatic accounts of some situation only agree on their common point of dogmatism. Both

Ishan and Vishnudas were unscrupulous in exaggerating Sita-Adwaita's spiritual feats -- but each in his own manner. These writers have certain worth not as factual writers but as fanciful creators of historical facts'!]

Since between themselves Ishan and Vishnudas each seems to beat the other in the matter of showering eulogy on their idols, a comparative study of their feat has an intrinsic literary interest, besides the evidence of the fake character of their 'factual assertions', which such studies necessarily provide. Dr. Sen has pointed to the following anomalies :

1. The two writers (Achyut and Vishnudas) give entire incompatible arguments for the village of Jhatpal being the dwelling place of Ishan's descendants. We have dealt with this point already.

2. Ishan says, he came to Adwaita's place at the age of five and stayed there for evermore. Vishnudas says, he (Vishnudas) was the match-maker for the marriage of Sita and Adwaita.

3. Ishan says, he went over to Laur and began to live there in the year 1562 A.D. or thereabouts. Achyut says, it was 142 years later (ie. in or around 1704 A.D.) that Ishan's descendants began to live in Jhatpal. (We have noted above the dissentious report of Vishnudas.

Again, Mrinalkanti Ghosh in his preface to the second edition of 'Adwaita-Prakash' remarks that some branch of the family-tree with Ishan for its doyen have reached the 9th while others the 10th or the 11th generation. Dr. Mazumdar's estimate places the ordinal number of the current generation around 14 (or 15).

Let us quote Vishnudas at some length, which would pinpoint the incompatibility of two allegedly competent authority-opinions on even the basic and well-defined issues. Vishnudas's 'Sitakadamba' has the following on its P.27 :

'Shuniaa Ishan tabe lagilaa kandi
 Nabin ankur jena bhage, bajraaghaate n
 Tabe taare kripaa kari Sitathakuraani n
 Kahite lagilaa taare madhur je baani n
 Duksha naa bhabihho mane tumi Sadhujan
 Janu sange purbadeshe karaha gaman n
 Na kara rodan baahhaa sthir kara mati n
 Jhaatpaal graame jaaiaa karaha basati n
 Sei graamer madhye bhagnamandire n
 Jagannath Balaram taahaar bhitare n
 Shewt Shyamal tanu surendra-badan n
 Sange tomaare darshan diba dui jan n

The above verse-lines purport to :

At this Ishan breaks in tears
 Like a sprout which lightning tears.
 Sita cheers him saying, 'Being crest fallen
 Goes ill with you who 're a good person.
 Go and settle, in Jhaatpal
 There Jagannath's and Balaram's images in a temple
 Now in ruins are still there –
 One White, one Verdant – why dither !

[The author, Dr. Mazumdar admits that it would be difficult to decide between the alternatives upheld by the two writers concerned. But the difficulty itself is imaginary because (fortunately) both the writers have been scribbling out doggerels that speak of things of little genuineness. Dr. Mazumdar claims to have established the counterfeit nature of the book, 'Adwaita-Prakash'. Now he goes on to disprove the genuineness of 'Sitakadamba'.]

One glaring evidence of its being fake despite its specious originality consists in its piracy on Lochan's work as evinced

by its depiction of the laments of his mother and wife who apprehended Gouranga's imminent adoption of ascetic life. Expressions bodily taken over from Lochan give a lie to the claim that 'Sitakadamba' was older than Lochan's work. [The counter-argument that Lochan might indulge in the pastiche employed earlier on by Vishnudas is very flimsy. A greater poet won't copy a lesser poet – let alone a poetaster. Dr. Mazumdar has rightly referred to the strained metre and versification of Vishnudas as against the facile flow of the fourteen lettered metrical lines called 'payaar.']

Lokenath Das's 'Sitacharitra'

Mr. Achyut Tattwanidhi introduced the reading public to this book by means of his article in the Shitya Prashat Patrika (Vide No. 3, 1304 B.S.). Thereafter he published the work, 'Sitacharitra' in a journal (the Sri Vaishnabsangini or the Bhaktiprava). It was in 1333 B.S. that one Madhusudan Das published the book in print from Alati, Hooghly. According to Tattwanidhi, this Lokenath Das is no lesser a person than Narattamdas's Guru. Narattam was a Brindaban man; in the Mathura neighbourhood Lokenath's was a familiar name as it occurred in the invocation verse (ie., the prologue) of the book 'Haribhaktibilas'. The couplets of this work have been quoted in 'Bhaktirasaamrita', the latter being composed in 1541 A.D. Lokenath was already in Brindaban. When the book mentioned last was written (in 1541). But then, the book, 'Prembilas' asserts that Lokenath had come to Nabadwip to meet Bishwambhar in 1431 Sh. He had come from the village, Talgari, in the district of Jessore. Bishwambhar is quoted in 'Prembilas' as saying

'Madhye Pousmaas aachhe maagh shukla pakshe ॥
Tritiya dibase sanyas kariba jena dekhe ॥'

The verse lines in Bengali mean :

The month of pous over, shall light fortnight come
Of magha, on its third day a monk I become.

(Note that an immediate future action may not need the auxiliary 'will'; hence 'will become' has become 'become', simply).

Bishwambhar sent him to Brindaban. One who was an object of love and respect to the six Goswamis of Brindaban and who was chosen for Narattam Thakur's Guru, just cannot be considered the author of a book like 'Sitacharitra' – So opines Dr. Mazumdar who advances the following reasons to the effect :

1. The book, in question, itself provides evidence for its date of composition being later than 1615 A.D. For it is no wild guess to assume that Lokenath must have reached 20 at the time of his passage to Brindaban, which was, incidentally, a matter of 1510. (He devoted himself to Bhajan songs on reaching Brindaban as we find from the book itself). He was, on this basis of reckoning some 125 years old in 1615 A.D. Since Krishnadas Kaviraj's book, 'Chaitanya Charitamrita' has been mentioned in 'Sitacharitra', the writing of the latter cannot be a matter of any earlier date than 1615 A.D., the well-established composition date of the former.

And what does all this come to? Lokenath wrote his 'Sitacharitra' when he had already crossed his 125th year. Is it a plausible proposition at all to ascribe the physical and mental alertness as demanded by the book-making to a senile who had been a centenarian twenty-five years or even more before.

2. There is a gaudy allusion to Sita's miracle-making. One of her disciples, Nandaram has been proudly mentioned in this book. This Nandaram was, no doubt, a male who, nevertheless transvested and did his worship as a Sakhi (Aya Sahki or a friendly girl is said to be associated with Lord Krishna during

his stay in Brindaban. The present writer, Lokenath, is attributing to a male a form of Sadhana (spiritual practice or discipline) that belongs exclusively to females. So far so good. The form of Sadhana is a matter of Guru's discretion. But the preposterous account of this Nandaram, who also assumed a female name, having regular menstruation (as would be a woman after puberty and before menopause) is too much of a swallowing even for a fan of Sita. The writer is well conscious of the dose of premium it demands on one's credulity. So he cooks up the tale of a Nawab who verified the physiological miracle. [The writer of 'Sitacharitra' was certainly ignorant of the fact that the blood and mucosal tissue discharge from the uterus of a woman of an age-group, the periodic discharge being known as menstruation. Hence menstruation in the case of a male, who can never be gifted the uterus by any Sita's will-power, is not only in bad taste but also an execrable exercise in lying. It goes without saying that a man of the stature of the preceptor of Narattam Thakur cannot be a liar. Nor can he be ignorant of the menstruation - mechanism of women].

The more the merrier. So the writer of 'Sitacharitra' describes another trans-sexual sadhana of one shepherd, Rakhal. He was christened Haripriya by the same Gurbi (a female preceptor), Sita. The present Lokenath unwittingly mentions the word, 'Suba' in his book, 'Sitacharitra'. Now the word could not pass round till after Akbar, the Moghul Badshah founded Subas in 1576. But Lokenath was in Brindaban for decades then. How could he write in the manner of an eye-witness what happened at Shantipur or even in any part of Bengal for that matter?

[If he is not fancying or lying, he must be a miracle-man himself, and one feels, his power of clairvoyance etc. must have been Sita's envy as well. For there is no hint that he ever returned to Bengal to compose 'Sitacharit'.]

3. Dr. Mazumdar now quotes the chapter and the verse to establish that the crudity and the indecency of these quotes ill befits any decent gentleman – let alone a saintly Lokenath who was Narattam's Guru.

The quotes are :

'Sita bale je balile sei satya hoy .
Prakriti naa hoile daasi kemanete hoy
Ei boli dui shishye shankha dila haate .
Lalaate sindur dila beni baandhe rakhe .
Dhauter taar dui haatele parila
Kaanchuli khaguri pari gopibesh koila .

—x—x

Eta boli dui jan erila basan
Iha shuni shishya paane chaay thakurani .
Prakriti swavab donhaar dekhila takhani .

I need not crib. The lines in above purport to what follows:

Lord's servitor maid must a female be.
So Sita's two male disciples wear in glee
Brassieres and bear vermilion on forehead.
As the two males are next undressed,
By their female anatomy Sita's herself impaled.

[Dr. Mazumdar cannot believe that a civilized woman can bear to see two nudes, each a male, and inspect their sexual parts of the anatomy. The translator does emphasize, instead, the preposterousness of a male turning into a female by the occult power of a Sadhika like Sita – however thick the vermilion paste on forehead and however deft the make-up with the bra may be. The cock and bull story about one's Guru (Sita) simply means her disrespect – something this Lokenath lacks the wit to see.]

4. In the 'Sitacharitra' one comes across the 'Sri Chaitanyagayatri' and the 'Gourmantra' occurring as an

independent hymn. We are quoting an excerpt from the book where Sita is reported as addressing her two disciples in the following terms (Vide P.13 of the book) :

'Tabe Bishawambhar dhyān kariha manas ।
Sri Chaitanya - gayatri japiha baar dash ॥
Padya arghye pujiha taanke naanaa upahaare ।
Jaanhaar prasaade prem baraye bistaare ॥

English version :

Make up your mind to meditate
On Chaitanya, and at any rate,
To cant Chaitanya-gayatri ten times a day.
Offerings at his feet conduce to deeper love, I say.

There are a few informations in this book, which bear on Srichaitanya's life. The visit Sita paid to the home of Sachi just after she gave birth to Nemai, as reported here, is remarkable for reason of the writer's conscious suspension of both reason and common sense in course of the report. The text has on P.3 the following account of Sita's visit, which is very striking even by Lokenath's standards. It goes like what follows :

'Tabe Sitathakurani maya achchhaadila ।
Achetan rupe sachire rakhila ॥

x—x—x

Tabe haasi mahapravu chakshu meli chay ।
'Radha' boli sachipane Sribhuj baray ॥

English version :

Then Sita spreads her deluding veil
And casts on Sachi a hypotic spell.
Mahapravu smiles, opening his eyes anon.
He calls her 'Radha', stretching arms new-born.

[As the interpreter-cum-translator of Dr. Mazumdar's book, I must add an exegesis on spiritual force at this point. Illiterates

mean, as we all know, by God's omnipotence the power to undo all laws of Nature. These half-wits fail to see that natural laws are the ones through which he works his will in the manifested world-orders. So God won't allow a baby to preach the teachings of the Gita or give it the anamnesis of the Dwapar incarnation whereby the memory of Radha, Krishna's devotee, may be alive. What Lokenath writes in above is a cock and bull story. Neither can Sachi, a powerful lady – powerful enough to conceive and deliver a God-Incarnate – be thrown into hypnotic or comatose torpor by a woman like Sita whom no Yogi of Bengal worth mentioning has ever recognized as a spiritual celebrity. In these matters a half-lie would have served to heighten Sita. The unmitigated lie told by Lokenath has defeated Lokenath's purpose of overstating Sita's qualities. In any case, Dr. Mazumdar's outright rejection of the authenticity of 'Sitacharitra' is fully justified.]

While the miracle-mongering or the foisting of the miracle-making power on one's beloved is some subjective folly or some deficiency of consciousness so as to deserve more pity than rebuke, one cannot but take a sterner attitude to authors who distort plain and verifiable facts of life of so a great personage as Srichaitanya. While both Ishan and Lokenath state that Bishwambhar had been a pupil of Adwaita, the two are not of identical opinion about the academic relation of Achyut to Biswambhar. Ishan says, Biswambhar was Achyut's teacher while Lokenath declares them as class-mates under the common teacher, Adwaita. [Unfortunately, the law of excluded middle of elementary logic won't let both views be true. But discrepancies in such tangible matters compel one to reject either in so far as the relative trustworthiness of one or the other is totally unknown.] As far as the account given by Lokenath is concerned, Bishwambhar himself gladly acquiesced in Adwaita's proposal to have the former as his pupil. [Sita

cannot but partake of her share of glory as Lokenath's object of interest is no Bishwambhar, his cynosure, guide and life's finale being Sita. So Sita soon appears to take the centre stage.] Lokenath writes as if he was present when Sita lifted the young learner and took him in her arms. What is more, she even touched his feet in specious jest but having a significance whose profundity is only to be gauged by Lokenath. [There seems to be an overt rivalry between Ishan and Lokenath, each trying to go one better than the other when it comes to making a mountain of a mole-hill i.e., representing Sita's religiosity as a mark of spiritual summit. So Ishan says, Sita's miracle-power made Bishwambhar belch, emitting banana flavour which banana was eaten by another – Achyut. This gave Sita the miraculous information of Achyut's folly. The same story is recorded in Lokenath's book as well, the variant of banana here being milk-film (known as 'sar' in Bengali).

There is an overall resemblance in the descriptive detail of the passing of Lord Chaitanya. Ishan says – as we have noted already that the Lord entered the Jagannath temple and disappeared. He merged in the image of deity as Ishan would say. A similar account is contained in the following excerpt from 'Sitacharitra' :

'Ekdin Mahapravu singhadware gaman?
 Aramvila sankirtan loiaa bhaktagan ॥
 Bhaabaabeshe mandirete prabesh karila ॥
 Sabe bole pravu singhasane charila ॥
 Mahapravu naa dekhiaa sab bhatagan ॥
 Murchhita hoila sabe nahika chetan ॥
 Nischay karila pravu lila sangbaran ॥
 Mahapravur birahete karen krandan ॥'

English version (Abridged) :

Before hymn-singers inside the temple
 Mahapravu, of a sudden, turns invisible –

It's after his ascent to the deity's throne.

Devotees swoon, guessing the Lord's withdrawn.

Curiously, Lokenath and Ishan differ most irreconcilably on the biographical elements of Ishan himself. Ishan has, for example, made no reference to his passage to Nabadwip for serving Sachi. But there is such a reference in 'Sitacharitra'. Dr. Mazumdar thinks that Lokenath refers to the said incident to achieve a semblance of consistency with Brindabandas's 'Chaitanya Bhagbat' where the following lines occur :

'Ishan dilen jal dhuite charan ॥

Ishan karila sab griha upaskar ॥

Jata chhila abashesh sakal taanhaar ॥

Sebilen sarbakaal aaire Ishan ॥

Chaturdash lok madhye mahavagyaban ॥'

—Chaitanya Bhagbat, 2. 8. 207-208.

English version :

As a hewer of water for her foot-wash,

As a room-cleaner and performer of what's left by others

(Sachi's) factotum Ishan,

Who serves her ever, must be a blessed one.

Since Ishan serves Sachi always, he cannot be the one made out to be Adwaita-Prakash writer. The writer is described as a man-Friday in Sita's home. It is of interest to note that in the same journal that had published 'Sitacharitra' (viz., 'the Bhaktiprava'), one Basudeb Dasmandal wrote to express his idea of Lokenath as a Bangalee Vaishnab who dissembled for reasons of his own. [These reasons, we have seen, were to induce a belief that he had seen things as they happened. The ultimate motive was to create fresh Sita-fans.]

General Remarks on Sita-Adwaita biographies :

The author makes the following comments on the above genre of books. Let us quote him in full and using his own words :

'I have just finished my introduction to the five of the Sita-Adwaita biographies. In my considered opinion all five are counterfeit in the sense that the advertised authors are not their true authors. Each of the quintet under review has been described as being the work of one who had received the grace of Sita or of Adwaita, besides being responsible for the eye-witness account of things. The writer of 'Balyalila-sutra', is one Krishnadas as per the advertisement. His father was the contemporary of Raja Dibyasingha. The composer of the manuscript of Adwaita-Prakash is said to be one Ishan Nagar who was brought up in Adwaita's household and who stayed with Sita and Adwaita forevermore. Ishan was also a disciple of Adwaita. The writer of 'Sitacharitra' is said to be Lokenath who was older than Sri Chaitanya, being also the preceptor of Narattam Thakur. Vishnudas, the putative author of 'Sitagun-Kadamba' is also said to be the match-maker responsible for Sita's marriage. Haricharan who wrote 'Adwaitamangal' as per Achyut's bidding – as he says – happened to be Adwaita's disciple also.

'If the above account be the true statement of the said authors' identities, there would not be so much discrepancy between the reports contained in these books on the hand and those that pass for authentic ones due to standard authors of repute such as Murari Gupta, Kabikarnapur and Brindabandas. But these authors being authentic by common consent, sheer consistency with them – which is not to be sacrificed at any rate – would imply a sea change being necessary for the quintet of books, in question. For one thing, that would give a lie to the report that Adwaita was the spiritual initiator of Sachi and

Jagannath. One must also rule out the possibility of Bishwambhar having taken lessons in the Bhagbat from Adwaita. Nor can one speak of the miracle-making power of Adwaita, Sita and Achyut. [This is to be so if one regards the standard texts as authentic.]

[How is it that the five authors braved inconsistency with the words of men like Murari and Brindabandas. Did they know that Murari's word is act when any dispute about the Nabadwiplila of Srichaitanya would arise? The point is that they were not half so serious about the truth-value of their panegyric on Sita or Adwaita as they were about its propaganda-value. In fact, they were no biographers at all. They were no better than campaigners devoted to preach the bloated greatness of those two persons. If just a cross-section of the readers were deluded into believing their figments, that would count much as they thought.]

What is more, the five authors diverge – one from any other – even when they all mean to deify the same two persons. We have already pointed out how disastrously inconsistent they are even among themselves.'

Dr. Mazumdar next considers these works from a historical point of view. His first point of interest is, naturally, the actual date of composition of these spurious life-stories of Adwaita and Sita. It would be again expedient to reproduce in full what he observes.

He says, 'The manuscript of 'Balyalilasutra' is 150 years old. According to Achyut Babu, the book, 'Adwaita-Prakash' was brought out in print where the 155 years old manuscript was used. The handwritten copies of 'Sitagukadamba' and of 'Adwaitamangal' were respectively 47 and 145 years old. I have no information about any old copy of 'Sitacharitra', which has at all been available. I have shown how the printed version of 'Balyalilasutra' notably departs from the manuscript which it

was supposed to follow. Many instances of interpolation can be cited which were inserted into the manuscripts during their printing. These were added on the plea of corrections. There is no way to assess how many years had passed between the original composition and the preparation of its copy that ultimately appeared in print. We only know that the printed book was, in most cases a modified version of a 150 years old manuscript that was available for the purpose. But we just cannot even estimate the date when the original was composed. The same obfuscating lack of evidence prevents a fruitful guess in each case.

It is known from the book, 'Chaitanya Bhagbat' that some of Adwaita's sons refused to acknowledge Srichaitanya's divinity. In fact, Achyut was the lone son of Adwaita to admit that Srichaitanya was an Avatar. That it was so follows from the fact that Debakinandan's 'Vaishnab Bandana' and 'Vaishnab Bandana' by Brindabandas II desisted from adoring the memory of any son of Adwaita other than Achyut. Srijib's 'Vaishnab Bandana' explicitly disowns those sons of Adwaita (who denied that Sri Chaitanya was a God - Incarnate), avoiding any reference to them whatever except, of course, that of their being so ignored. Now, Achyut being a continent celibate, had no descendant of his own. There was some commotion concerning the descendants of Adwaita. May be the five books, in question were meant to stem the tide of that movement.'

Jagadananda's 'Prembibarta'

The Gouriya Math has published the book, 'Prembilas' by Jagadananda Pandit, an associate of Mahāpravū. Dr. Mazumdar has had the opportunity to see the fourth edition of the book brought out in 1337 B.S. But the standard of its content did not seem to convince him that it could be Jagadananda's work at all. The style and the theme, including the facts and figures

seem to make the authorship - declaration pretty suspect. Dr. Mazumdar cannot bear to consider the book the handiwork of Jagadananda himself. The book has practically little new material on Srichaitanya's life. Nearly everything is as in Srichaitanya Charitamrita, [The crucial point is the conspicuous absence of an air of personal touch with Sri Chaitanya', although Jagadananda was a companion of the Lord. Krishnadas Kaviraj had to trust to others who saw Sri Chaitanya. How is it that Jagadananda's book merely echoes the second-hand material of Krishnadas's work rather than provide informations which none else than close associates alone can. The whole thing is open to suspicion as Dr. Mazumdar rightly feels.]

The writer of 'Prembibarta' is, however, particular about making an issue of his contact and personal bond with Sri Chaitanya. He offers the following apology for his book-making :

'Chaitanyer rup gun sada pare mane १
 Paran kaandaay dehu kaanpaay saghane ॥
 Dekhechhi anek lila thaaki pravusange १
 Kichhu Kichhu likhi taai nija mana range ॥
 Man kaande praan kaande kaande duti aankhi १
 Jakhan jaahaa mane pare takhan taahaa likhi ॥'

English version :

Chaitanya's traits and visage often occur
 To mind – my heart cries with a body's tremor.
 Have witnessed many a feat of the Lord
 From close – some of 'em I casually record.
 My eyes wet, heart and mind grieve
 As memories rise, vent to 'em I give.

The writer is technically perfect. Accounting for his book-making, he next introduces himself to his reader, taking the

opportunity, inter alia, of focussing on his noble connections. He also mentions, as if casually, that Lord Chaitanya himself would eat of what he cooked with care. To quote his own words,

'Dhanya Kabikarnapur swagram nibaasi 1
 Naamer mohimaa kichhu rakhila prakaaasi 11
 Jaare kripaa kare bishwe sei dhanya 1
 Saptabarsha bayase hoila mahakabi manya 11
 Dhanya Shibananda kabi karnapur pitaa 1
 More balye shikhaaila Bhagbat Gita 11
 Nadia loiaa more raakhee pravu-pade 1
 Shibananda bhraatyaa mor sampade bipade 11
 Taar ghare bhog raandhi paak shikha hoila 1
 Vala paak kori Sri Gouranga seba koila 11'

English version :

Blessed are Kabikankar's village-folk
 His name daubs with glory the whole stock.
 It's a treat to receive his pity
 At 7 he was an ace poet already –
 Something blissful to his dad, Shibananda, as well–
 The man to teach me the Gita as I 'd tell.
 He made me over to the Lord's feet at Nadia, I mean.
 He was Shibananda fraternal through thick and thin.
 Cooking for his deity's worship-rite I mastered
 cuisine;
 My culinary skill served the Lord too of mine.

Continuing, the writer refers to his intimacy with Damodar Swarup and asserts his conviction that Gouranga is Lord Krishna himself. He also makes a passing reference to his assignment of serving Giridhari, the deity, some where on a riparian site. Incidentally, he also vouches for Swarup-

Damodar's devotion to Lord Chaitanya. There occur in 'Prembibarta' a few miracle-tales as well. These are, of course, extraneous to the content of 'Chaitanya Charitamrita'. [As the translator-cum-interpreter of Dr. Biman B. Mazumdar's work, I wish to add that Krishnadas Kaviraj, the writer of 'Chaitanya Charitamrita' had high high regards for Lord Chaitanya but no feeling about his divinity. Those Goswamis of Brindaban who fought tooth and nail against 'Gour-mantra' also expressed similar mixed reverence for Chaitanya. To them he was a Krishna-lover. To Bengal Vaishnabs of consequence it was a left-handed compliment, since these devotees regarded him as one with Lord Krishna. I understand Krishnadas, who was a scholar with little theoretical or practical knowledge of spirituality, would not bear to attribute miraculous power to Lord Chaitanya. Perhaps he feared such feats would place him closer to Lord Krishna than he personally can bear with pleasure. Krishnadas is wrong at either remove. Lord Chaitanya did perform a number of miracles. He was an Incarnate of God also. But his Avatarhood is not proved by his miracle-making feats. Lesser yogis who have performed even more amazing feats of the sort were no Avatars. So I do not attach any importance to Krishnadas's wilful omission of Lord Chaitanya's miraculous feats. No writer – Krishnadas or anyone else – can say the last word about an Avatar's inner life. Their true business is to depict the outer life of the human front of the interior divinity.]

Jagadananda records the following 'fable' or incident in his book. (It is up to the reader to consider it a fable or an incident.)

Gour, then a boy, went to the bank of the Ganga, strong with other two. One of them was Gadadhar. The three boys caught one parrot there.

Gour next did something very strange. Jagadananda records :

'Shuke dhorī bale tui Byaser nandan ॥

Radhakrishna bolī kara ananda bardhan ॥

—Prembibarta, P.11.

English version :

Catching a parrot, Gour gives it the behest –

'You, child of Vyas! cant 'Radhakrishna, amuse us best.'

[If the above episode admits of indulgent amusement in a die-hard atheist, who would rationalize the tale as an extravaganza of childish fancy, the following piece will be irritating to a materialistic sciolist. For parrots can and do mimic human speech, but no crocodile, outside the pages of a fable can be imagined to talk in an evangelic manner.]

Jagadananda writes that Gouranga's devotional song (of the Kirtan class) induced a crocodile to climb up to the bank of the river. What is more, the aquatic animal suddenly began to talk in an evangelical manner of a celestial child.

—Ibid, PP 47, 48

[As the translator, I regret the cryptic end to the crocodile-tale. Dr. Mazumdar's book does not reproduce the sequel to the preternatural speech. Nor do I possess Jagadananda's original either.] The place name associated with the tale is Gourdahā where Gour met the strange crocodile.

[For the reader interested in miracle-tales I add the Mahabharat speaks of lower forms of life of a special kind. A saint, a yogi or a prince may, for some sin, be born in the next incarnation as an insect, a bird or a beast. Still deep inside, the higher consciousness lies dormant. Some song, yogic force or some saint's blessing may evoke the inner being, which may act momentarily in a human or even a saintly manner. Yet these are legends. A man, however unconscionable a sinner he may be, won't be re-born as a lower animal. A part of his being– the

vital (or pranamoy) being may be attached to a cat, a dog or a snake. It is still possible, in theory, that the human vital associated with the animal will, under yogic force-field, be compelled to behave for a moment as a human being. Considering all these, I just refuse to assess the truth-value of the miracle-rites that are entered into his book by Jagadananda. The interested reader may look up the details of the science of re-birth – science to a yogi, to whom it's no speculation – in the works of Sri Aurobindo.]

Jagadananda reports on P.17 of his book on an altercation he had with the sapient, old Sanatan Goswami. He went off the deep end and behaved rudely as he himself admits.

Dr. Mazumdar remarks in this connection that the publications of the Gouriya Math seem to preach that chanting Hari's name in any kind of company is enough for attaining to the level of spiritual love. [The following two excerpts from 'Preambibarta', which have been cited by Dr. Mazumdar such that the second immediately follows the first, may appear to be mutually destructive. But there is no real conflict. The first emphasizes the importance of the company from a spiritual class-criterion while the second de-emphasises the significance of social casteism. A recital of Harinaam is conducive to devotion if and only if all participants are earnest about it. A perfunctory recital and a rigid casteism are counter-productive, each in a different way.]

Citation 1.

'Asadhu sange bhaai Krishnanaam naahi hoy १
 Namakshar baahiraay bate tavu naam kavu noy ॥
 Kavu naamaavaas hoy sadaa naam aparaadh १'

—Preambibart, P.17

English version :

Canting 'Krishna' in evil companies
 Or just mouthing those phonemes means
 Nothing; but fallacious or constant chants lead to sins.

Citation 2.

'Kibaa barni, Kibaa srami kibaa barnasramhin ॥
 Krishnabettaa jei sei aachaarya prabin ॥
 Aasal katha chhere bhaai barne je kare aadar ॥
 Asadguru kori taar binasta purbaapar ॥'

English version :

No caste, livelihood or pedigree
 Argues to a preceptor's spirituality.
 One tethered to casteism 'd perish
 Under a false prophet's Vile whims.

[There is a lot of confusion regarding the exact site of Sri Chaitanya's birth Dr. Mazumdar remarks that no book written before the beginning of the 18th century (ie., those composed earlier than 'Bhaktiratnaakar') contended that Mayapur was that all-important area where the Lord incarnated. Gouriya Math Publications – 'Nabadwip Shatak' and 'Prembibarta' – harp on the contention that Sri Chaitanya's birth-place was in Mayapur. The temple of Mayapur, says Jagadananda in 'Prembibarta', has been built on the exact site of Jagannath Misra's house. In fact, he repeatedly asserts it – in 'Prembibarta'.

Jagadananda effusively describes the confluence of certain rivers as a meet ground for a divine birth (such as Mayapur enjoys.) [The theory has the advantage of facilitating a neo-Brindaban image being projected on the 'preferred' birth-place of the Lord. But its disadvantage is that Lord Ramakrishna himself had verified by his power of infallible intuition that the true birth-place has merged in the ever-encroaching river-water. No amount of reasoning can weigh more than Sri Ramkrishna's impeccable insight. Dr. Mazumdar also believes that Jagannath Misra's mud house (as described by Murari and Brindabandas) has disappeared under the Ganga waters.]

Dr. Mazumdar repudiates the genuineness of 'Prembibarta' in as much as a boyhood day's chum, Jagadananda – if he had

been one – must have elicited respectful interest of Vaishnab writers. The fact remains that no celebrity of the Vaishnab cult has ever reffered to his book. This is why the author considers 'Prembibarta' counterfeit. [The author, however, is in despair regarding the knowing of the exact location of where Jagannath had his house. He speaks sarcastically of mystics who rely on celestial voices or envision basil plants during sleep. Such voices are not historical evidences (as he remarks in the manner of a typical agnostic). However incongruous his attitude may seem to a devotee and a yogi – if any yogi ever cares for mundane matters of Sri Chaitanya's biographers' interest) the ardent effort made by Dr. Mazumdar has definitely contributed to clear up certain controversial issues of Sri Chaitanya's inner life. As to his inner life, well, one cannot expect an agnostic or a materialist to produce a 'replica' of M's Kathaamrita. In fact, Dr. Mazumdar does not even mention Lord Ramkrishna's intuitive solution of the Chaitanya birth-place mystery. But his attitude to these matters is clear– he disbelieves the spiritual way of knowing. The reader will be good enough (hopefully) to appreciate the frequent addenda I have been providing here. A spiritual prophet's life is not all clock and calendar. God has a place in it, and spiritual experience of the prophet is what determines his individuality even as parentage, monthly salary etc. determine it in the case of ourselves. I have been compelled to explain such things as our author is averse to considering except as figments. And these are things such as spiritual experience and spiritual realization that map out the contour of a yogi's or an Avatar's life. His real life is not to be found in the collection of manuscripts and printed books describing his outer front.

Murali-Bilas and Bangshi-Shiksha

The two books – 'Murali-Bilas' and 'Bangshi-Shiksha' – were published almost concurrently and from the same place

Baghnagara. Bangshi-Shiksha was published in 407 Chaitanyabda and Murali-Bilas two years later, the demonstrandum of each being the greatness of one companion of Sri Chaitanya and his grandson. The two, in question bore the names of Bangshibadan Thakur and Ramai (Pronounced Raamaai) Thakur. 'Murali-Bilas' (Pron. Bilaas) is biographical. But 'Bangshi-Shiksha' deals with spiritual matters. In the fourth chapter of 'Bangshi-Shiksha' is included the material discussed in the book, 'Murali-Bilas'. Even the language is adapted from there. It is in order, then, to take up 'Murali-Bilas' first. Before its publication 'Murali-Bilas' was entitled 'Bangshi-Bilas'. This is also the title by which 'Bangshi-Shiksha' refers to this book. In fact one finds the verse,

Sri Rajballav Koila Sribangshibilas ।

Bangshir mahimaajahe bistaar Prakaash ॥

—Bangshi-Shiksha, 2nd Ed., P.235

(Note that diacritical signs being an anathema to the compositor of the press, we sometimes indicate the pronunciation of non-nominals. For instance, 'mahima' is spelt 'mahimaa'. Sometimes we add phonetic aid as when we write bilas (Pron. bilaas) even for nominals. These notes are to be skipped by the reader conversant with Bengali or Sanskrit.)

[The quote in Bengali from 'Bangshi-Shiksha' means,

Sri Raj Ballav wrote the book, 'Sri Bangshi-Bilas'

On Bangshi's glories the book expands.]

'Bangshi-Bilas' is certainly an apter title than 'Murali-Bilas'. After all, Bangshi and his descendant Ramai (Pron. Raamaai) are the objects to glorify here. The change of title seems to have been prompted by the more mellifluous sound-value of the word, 'Murali'. [The oddity of synonymy hunt for an allegedly nonconnotative proper name would not particularly please a logician. The meaning of a proper name is the person

(or object) it names. A synonym is apt to change the meaning. 'Surya' means the same thing in the lexicon as 'Rabi'. But Surya Sen, the martyr will not be denoted by 'Rabi Sen'. Yet 'Bangshi' and 'Murali' are supposed to denote here the same person (just on the plea of their dictionary - meanings being identical.)

There is not even a solitary reference to Bangshibadan Thakur in the combined literature of Murari Gupta, Kabikarnapur and Brindabandas. The name does not occur in the genealogy of various branches of Vaishnabs as compiled by Krishnadas Kaviraj. There is no mention of Bangshibadan in the 'Vaishnabbandana' due either to Brindabandas II or to Debakinandandas. Curiously, all the three epithets of 'Gourpadatarangini' that heighten the glory of Bangshi have been bodily taken over from 'Murali-Bilas' and 'Bangshi-Shiksha' — two from the former and one from the latter. This reveals the status of Bangshi among the associates of Sri Chaitanya. It goes without saying that it was none too high.

'Prembilas', on the other hand mentions Bangshi for once by way of Srinibas Acharya's visit to Nabadwip. Bangshi is said to be present when Srinibas met Bishnupriya. To cut off with a shilling is, no doubt, worse than ignoring the person altogether.

Rajballav, the writer of 'Murali-Bilas' is Bangshi's great grandson and Ramai's disciple. The editor has appended a family-tree of Bangshi at the end of the book, which shows Ramai as a grandson of Bangshi. The writer, Rajballav, was it is seen, the nephew of Ramai (besides being his disciple).

The writer gives the following account of his initiation by his uncle, Ramai. Ramai had been to Baghnapura in connection with the installation of an image of a deity or an idol. Ramai took the opportunity to enjoin his younger brother, Sachinandan to gift his son, Rajballav, to him. The giving was meant to be without reservation. Sachinandan obliged his elder brother, Ramai. So Rajballav was admitted as Ramai's disciple.

Rajballav expatiates on his Guru's efforts to initiate him to the law of piety. Let us quote Rajballav's own words :

'Pravate uthiaa pita aamaare loiaa 1
 Pravur charanpadme dila samarpiaa 11
 Dandabat koila pita taanr paadatale 1
 Dui bhaai-e kolaakuli mahakutuhale 11
 More pravu shishya koilaa karia karunaa 1
 Sadaachaar shikhaaila karia tarana 11
 Seba shikhaailaa more haate haate dhorī 1
 Shastrabhakti shikhaaila bahu kripa kori 11

Taanr mukhe je shuninu pravur charit 1
 Taar alpamatra ei granthe hoila likhit 11

The gist of the above lines is :

One fine morning father gave me over
 To my uncle who became my preceptor
 To teach me conduct-code he'd even chastise
 But he also taught scriptures, giving training in
 service.

He related Pravu's life, which I only summarize.

In the preface to 'Bangshi-Shiksha', Dr. Bhagabat Shastri describes Rajballav as Sachinandan's grandson, which is very strange in view of the explicit mention in the selfsame book of Sachinandan being Rajballav's father. (Sec. P.235 of the book).

Since Rajballav's preceptor, Ramai, was the disciple of Jahnabi and a friend of Bribhadra, one would tend to trust Rajballav's description of those two persons more than any given by 'Bhaktiratnakar'. In view of this a priori trust in Rajballav, we must test for the genuineness of the book. That is to say, we must see that it is not the handiwork of some other writer than

Rajballav. [A later writer would prefer anonymity to missing the honour of near contemporaneity with personages like Jahnabi and Birbhadra. The rationale of publishing a book under the fake authorship of one who might witness things is this innate urge of the reader to believe a writer who was coeval with the events and the persons described in a book rather than a non-contemporary later person who actually wrote it.]

uncouth anachronism is writ large on P.714 of 'Bangshililamrita' where we may peruse the following distich (in Sanskrit) :

'Bangshi Krishnapriyaa jaasit Bangshibadan
Thakkurah 1

Ityaadi dipikaadou cha Kabivirgiyate pura 1'

English version :

Krishna loved Bangshibadan and the flute alike,
As the 'Dipika's poet and the like speak.

(Note that the word 'Banshi' means a flute or a pipe)

Anachronism is detected by any that knows that the 'Dipika' was written by Kabikarnapur who was coeval with Bangshibadan's disciple, Jagadananda. The book 'Bangshililamrita', which was written earlier than 'Murali-Bilas', is not supposed to anticipate Kabikarnapur's works. May be, the distich, in question is an interpolation. In either event, one cannot but question the genuineness of 'Murali-Bilas' itself.

True, its lay-out and lucid style would scarcely make the reader quizzical about the genuineness of 'Murali-Bilas'. If it emulates Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita's mannerism, well, that was nothing unusual those days. The manuscript being recovered from one of the descendants of the writer's family-tree, one has no misgivings on this score either. Even the style is old-fashioned. There being nothing that is new-fangled or of the kind of neologism, one's trust in the genuineness of the work

is re-inforced. The book is strewn with marks of scholarship. No fewer than 133 slokas (distichs) have been incorporated, in it. The slokas of Krishnadas Kaviraj's 'Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita' are integrated in the theme concerned. Anything like cohesion of the quoted slokas with the theme of 'Murali-Bilas' is not there at all. Besides, of the 133 slokas quoted here, some 64 were already employed by Krishnadas Kaviraj for his book. It is claimed nevertheless that the writer of 'Murali-Bilas' looked them up in the original texts including Padma Puran and Gobinda-lilamrita. [The author, Dr. Mazumdar, however concedes a point to the condender for the recognition of genuineness of the book under consideration. He does not take exception in the unacknowledged debt of the writer, in question to Krishnadas Kaviraj. For that by itself does not detract from the genuiness-value of the book.]

But, then, one of the descendants of Bangshibadan himself — a scion of the same family— has a different story to tell. This scholar, Dr. Bhagbat Shastri suspects interpolations galore as he finds in the account of Ramchandra's career as given in 'Bangshi-Shiksha' an exact echo of what 'Murali-Bilas' records. The book, 'Murali-Bilas' came out in print later than 'Bangshi-Shiksha'. But that does not preclude the possibility of the manuscript of the later printed work being used as a source-book or for plagiarizing as well.

A far more incredible account of Banshi's subtle body appearing in vision before his daughter-in-law even before his death is given. It is written in this book, 'Bangshi-Shiksha' that Bangshi's preternatural interview with the wife of his son was meant to convey his blessing to her. [A modern psychiatrist — if he is another sciolist like Freud — would interpret the woman's dream-encounter with her father-in-law in terms of a 'displaced' electra complex. Those who find it easier to believe the psychoanalyst's quibble than the subtle body affair might

feel reassured by the inane and trite jargon of the excogitator. But the whole story is anachronistic in any case. The date of Ramchandra's death as given here is at variance with what is inscribed on the temple-peak at Baghnapura Balaram shrine.]

Dr. Bhagbat Shastri suspects both copying from 'Murali-Bilas' and interpolation in the printed book. For one thing, 'Bangshicharit' declares that his son was a baby at the time of Bangshi's death. How possibly could he have a daughter-in-law at the time at all? Dr. Shastri's outspoken criticism is to be appreciated as a new feature of editorial comments on Vaishnab texts. But Dr. Mazumdar faults him nevertheless on one point. While Dr. Shastri speaks of 'certain later interpolations' into the original 'Murali-Bilas', Dr. Mazumdar goes to argue that it is an under-statement to remark that interpolations are occasionally detected. 'The fact remains that the entire book (available in print) is a recent work', says Dr. Mazumdar. The arguments offered by him in defence of his attitude are :

1. Rajballav himself would prefer an in-depth study of Ramai's career and character. [A disciple has no dearth of data on his Guru. Nor can he rest content with a superficial study of his Guru.] The egregious omission of the names of the 'Bipra' and of the 'Kanyaa' in the following lines (quoted from 'Murali-Bilas', P.44) is inconceivable if Rajballav were the actual writer, since the two were his great grand mother and her father. The said lines are :

'Ek bipra mahashay param pandit 1

Kanyaaadan diba boli karen nischit u'

The lines mean to say :

A Brahmin of great sapience

Resolves to give his daughter in marriage.

The striking point here is that one had to utter the names of forefathers such as the father of the great grandmother on the

occasion of offering to the mane i.e., the ritual of obsequies called 'Sraddha' in Sanskrit and Bengali.

2. Not only is the account of Ramai scrappy and casual, it bristles with errors as well – a circumstance that would not arise if Ramai's disciple, Rajballav, wrote the book, 'Murali-Bilas'. It is reported in 'Murali-Bilas' that once Ramai went to Brindaban and that Jahnabi was with him. He stayed there for five years at a stretch and then came back to Bengal. On his return from Brindaban a temple was built at Baghnapura under his aegis. It is also reported in that book that Ramai met each of the six Goswamies while he was at Brindaban.

Now it has been conclusively established that the temple at Baghnapura was built in 1616 A.D. On the basis of the book, one infers that Sanatan and Rup were in the land of living at least till Ramai arrived at Brindaban in 1610 A.D. (or 1611 A.D.). The foundation of the temple being in 1616 A.D., 5 or 6 years before that event, viz., Ramai's alleged arrival at Brindaban, where he stayed for 5 years or more, must be around 1610 A.D. Now all sources of information worth heeding deny Sanatan and Rup were alive till 1610 A.D.

[One piece of lie usually strengthens itself by companion lies. Unfortunately for the liar, a critical investigator finds his job of lie-detection much easier, since he has now met with more than one loop-hole to peer through at the face of truth. The lie about Sanatan and Rup is re-inforced by the writer of 'Murali-Bilas' by giving a delectable picture of all six Goswamis – some of them above 125 if they were assumed alive – roaming inside the forest paths!]

Sanatan and Rup were both older than Sri Chaitanya. If they were living in 1610 A.D., they must have been above 125. What a fantasy! In fact, it's a cock and bull story about men who were long deceased. [And, what a romance? Goswamis with Jahnabi enjoying the greenery of the forest!]

3. According to 'Murali-Bilas' Ramai went to Nilachal to find that Gadadhar Pandit, Ray Ramananda and Sarbabhoum Bhattacharya were all living.

He also spoke of one Raja in the following terms :

'Sri Prataprudra Maharaj Chakraborty १

Bishay chhariaa bhaabe Chaitanya murati ॥

—Murali-Bilas, P.189

English version :

Renouncing riches Maharaj Pratap sees

Chaitanya's image by mind's eyes.

The writer has already referred to Bangshi's demise where he writes,

'Chaitanya Gosain jabe aprakat hoilaa १

Shunimatra Bangshidas lila sambarilaa ॥

—Murali-Bilas, P.47

[I won't use the sublime term 'lila' to describe the worldly life of any that has discriple to deify him. I have given reasons for that already. Hence Bangshi's death is just death and not a suspension or cessation of lila. So I translate the quote from P.47 of 'Murali-Bilas' as follows :

Lord Chaitanya's withdrawal

Causes Bangshi's instant death withal.

There is more puzzlement in wait. 'Murali-Bilas' also speaks of Bangshi's subtle body encounter with his son's wife whom he tells that he would be born to her in his next rebirth. Let us pretend for a moment that Bangshi is re-born as Ramai. But this 'phenomenon' must be assigned some date not earlier than 1533 A.D. – the year in which Lord Chaitanya withdrew his lila. And that would mean that Ramai (i.e., Bangshi re-born as Ramai) could not visit Nilachal earlier than 1649 i.e., the year in which he was 16. Dr. Mazumdar is satisfied that Pratap Maharaj was not alive in 1649 A.D. So the report of Ramai

witnessing his ascetic turn on his visit to Nilachal is another lie so gorgeously dressed on P.189 of the book.]

4. There is in 'Murali-Bilas' very little that is an intimate account of a Guru (Ramai) by a disciple (Rajballav). Ramai's wandering in places of pilgrimage and some conversations with different persons (where one detects the style and the ideas of 'Charitamrita') are about the only things apart from the foundation of the temple at Baghnapura that are dealt with in this book. Even Ramai's death is described in a manner that befits the passing of any Vaishnab. Ramai is said to mutter Radhakrishna and drop down dead. A moment before he was reading some devotional sloka (distich). And that's all. [This terseness is not even a courteous reaction of a disciple whose Guru is just dead. One is supposed to allot more time to describing the passing of one's Guru.]

Dr. Mazumdar's doubt about the genuineness of 'Murali-Bilas' is further re-inforced by its inconsistency with 'Prembilas' and 'Bhaktiratna'. The significant agreement between these two books is relevant to the author who finds the following report in both the references regarding Jahnabi's transit to Brindaban :

Srinibas reached Brindaban after Rup and Sanatan had died. Returning he joined the Kheturi festival. It was only after that festival that Janaki went over to Brindaban.

Now, the 'Murali-Bilas' story of Jahnabi's discussion with Rup and Sanatan and her subsequent 'disappearance' in the garden known as Kamyaban contradicts the above report. [The author would trust better known authors and works rather than miracle-mongers who make a live woman vanish into airy nothing by a stroke of fancy.] One must consider the popularity even of hear-says incorporated in 'Premabilas' and 'Bhaktiratnakar'. These two are, however, not so much as rather than a spurious text shrouded in anonymity and tainted by fake author— name such as Rajballav.

[Very wild was the fancy of the unknown writer. Well, anybody, who lived hundreds of years later than the advertised author, Rajballav, might write such stuff provided he had scant regards for truth and even scanted common sense. Even as a literary work, the book is rotten for its over indulgence in myths. A Vaishnab, even in the ecstasy of emotion, must not lie about Lord Chaitanya. And 'Murali-Bilas' is caught tripping in this matter also. Let us see how.]

One sample of the scant respect for truth in depicting events concerning Lord Chaitanya himself is given below :

'Sachikumar Dekhi Sukumar

Balak loiyaa kole 1

Pulakita anga Adhir trivanga

Amar murali bole u'

—Murali-Bilas, P.4.

English version :

Sachi's son poised triply bent lifts the new-born

In his arms and address him as 'Murali' anon.

[It is known from 'Bangshi-Bilas' that Sri Chaitanya was nine years his senior; so at Bangshi's birth hour he was a boy of 9. Is it possible that a nine year old would rush to a labour-room to take in arms a new-born and even christen it?]

On P. 43 of 'Murali-Bilas' is the following verse :

'Kaishore bayase aarambhila sangkirtan 1

Gouranger sange naache bhubanmohan u'

The quoted lines mean,

Adolesence sees him singing hymns and dancing

With Gouranga beside— a sight universally charming.

[Rhetorics apart, it says that Sri Chaitanya's choir included him (Bangshi), which may be a fact as well.]

On P. 74 of this book one reads the lines

'Gadadhardas sange thaakibe sadaai ॥

Jagannath rahiba dekhibe sabe jaai ॥'

Which signify :

Stick to Gadadhardas always –

You may all see me at Jagannath's place.

The point is that Sri Chaitanya himself did not know his mind and was undecided about where to start his post-monkhood pilgrimage from. Ultimately, it was to Brindaban that he first paid a visit. Certainly, the idea of Jagannath temple is a figment of the mind of the writer.

Coming to the other book, 'Bangshi-Shiksha', one is confronted by the rarity of its copy. One mutilated, worm-burrowed copy with torn pages, which was written by Premdas – the person who translated the play, 'Chaitanyodaya' – was lost subsequently. It was written in 1716 A.D. It is unlikely that a book written 183 years after the departure of Sri Chaitanya (in 1533 A.D.) may be a source-book of Sri Chaitanya's biography or a basis of books to popularize his teachings. Contemporaneity's historical value is not to be expected in any such later work.

The main argument or theme of 'Bangshi-Shiksha' is the lessons Sri Chaitanya had given Bangshi prior to his (Sri Chaitanya's) adoption of monkhood. It is learnt from 'Bangshi-Shiksha' that Sri Chaitanya advised Banishi 'to worship the divine as the Lord of charming pleasure and kindred emotions'.

[There is no English equivalent of the Sanskrit word, 'rasa'. It is a complex term for the emotion of amour or of devotion in this context. But a 'rasa' of friendly or servitor- like feeling or even of the bizarre effect on the vital-emotional being may be possible. I have been rather euphemistic in translating 'rasaraj' as the lord of

pleasure. The fact remains that devotional joy and amorous pleasure may both be regarded as means to adore the rasaraj. A lot of confusion with inevitable degeneration into sensuality begins with this rasaraj-oriented sub-cults of Vaishnabism. Note the meaningful but explicit reluctance of Dr. Mazumdar to dilate on theroretical questions raised by this way of rasaraj-adoration.]

While leaving out theoretical matters of the new rasaraj cult, the author is meticulous about the chronological anomalies of Premdas. Anachronism occurs galore in this book. The all-important point is the standpoint. It is seen that 'Bangshi-Shiksha' is completely out of phase with, and often quite antipodal to, the standard literature of the time so far as the seeker's outlook and the modus operandi of the Vaishnab creed are concerned. [The writer of 'Bangshi-Shiksha' seems to be apprehensive of adverse reaction to this 'way of rasaraj worship'. That is why he seeks to forestalls such reaction by cooking up stories to augment Bangshi's halo.]

Let us quote the words put in the mouth of Bishwambhar himself who, reportedly, recited the following verse from 'Kwachidupapuran' (which title literally means 'a certain upapuran'):

'Krishnakare sthithaa jaa saa dutikaabangshikaa tathaa 1
Sri Bangshibadano nam bhabishyati kalou jure 11'

The sloka prophesies the august advent on earth in the kaliyuga i.e., in this materialistic era where money, and not piety is the summum bonum. There is a hint that he was a Krishna-favourite in his pristine incarnation too. [So far so good as fiction. But one must look facts in the face. How does the writer miss the exact name or title of the upapuran? Anybody capable of writing a few lines in Sanskrit may claim some upaparanic source thereof. Scholars in Sanskrit can

supply any number of modern texts and ascribe them to backdated authors. This is how different sects had their sectarian fake Purans written by scholars belonging to respective sects. There was a time (in the 18th and 19th century – Bengal) when such contrived Purans were the order of the day. Dr. Dinesh Sen in his book on Bengali language and literature wrote about one old Puran which was partly modernized by anti-Vaishnab sects to show on a Puranic authority that a demon would appear on earth, who would be known as Sri Chaitanya'. The present 'upapuran' is meant to make a deity of Bangshibadan.]

The next 'gem' is from PP. 43-44 of 'Bangshi-Shiksha' itself :

'Pravubakya shuni Bangshi Srikrishna smaria ॥

Kaane haat diaa kan binoy kariaa ॥

O he pravu baulaami kariaa barjan ॥

Shunao prakasha tattwa kori kripekshan ॥'

English version :

Remembering Krishna, Bangshi humbly says,

'Lord, teach me the doctrine, shunning desultoriness'.

[The fraud on the 'Upaparan' is very consciously done. One doing it knows that the eulogy on Bangshibadan would be counter-productive if Bangshi himself felt flattered by it. So he is depicted as a picture of humility when the Lord 'speaks' of his name occurring in an 'ancient text'. We have argued that the whole episode is fictitious. Note the word 'baulaami' of the Bengali verse. The pejorative sense of craziness is what it connotes. Is it possible that Bangshi dared to use it for Lord Chaitanya?]

Now, what did Chaitanya indoctrinate? 'Bangshi-Shiksha' writes the following.:

'Rasaraj Krishna laagi bipra-patnigan ॥

Apan apan swami karen barjan ॥

~~~~~ X—X—X

Seikaale Krishnarupi Sadguru-charane १  
 Sarbaswa arpan kori loibe sharane ॥  
 Sarbaswa arpan arthe shuddha artha naya १  
 Pranman aadi ei bedagame kaya ॥'

The verse quoted purports to :

For the sake of Krishna, the Lord of love's house  
 Many a Brahmin wife deserts her spouse.

Offering everything to Guru, take in him refuse

By 'everything' mind and heart besides money one brews.

Even Dr. Mazumdar, who never bluntly speaks out, remarks that Premdas's 'Bangshi-Shiksha' was like a campaign for the Sahajiaa cult. Bipinbehari Goswami in his 'Dashamulras' adores Banshi but admits that there has been some interpolation of Sahajiaa cult in Premdas's book. The Sahajiya stuff made out to be Sri Chaitanya's own teaching is the brain-wave of someone addicted thereto. No contemporary has ever referred to Sri Chaitanya's espousal of this kind of Sadhana. [The strict ascetism including prohibition against even sighting or addressing females and Sahajiaa cult of unrestricted license as a means to achieve devotion to Krishna are antipodal as ideals or life-styles. Did not Lord Chaitanya desert a disciple who went to woman to beg rice for the Lord himself? His purpose was good. Yet the 'sin' of speaking to a woman was not extenuated. Moreover, a cult does not flourish if it seeks to thrive on the support of Brahmin wives who are, after all, creatures of clay like ourselves. Just as God is not our prime object of concern, Krishna in the true sense could not be the cynosure of those house-wives. A spiritual cult invariably rises or falls according as its whole-time sadhaks are sincere or hypocritical. And a full-time sadhak is not to be found in a household where mundane matters alone matter. The Sahajiaa cult which projects Krishna on a Guru and which demands that a married woman too must give herself integrally

to the Guru in the manner of 'Bangshi-Shiksha's verse quoted above, is apt to confuse 'amorous tie' with a 'spiritual bond'. I must not be mealy-mouthed on this dangerous issue as the reader may otherwise be led to believe in Sri Chaitanya's indulgence in the cult. Incidentally, the Lord himself never had an encounter with his wife during his life as a monk. This by itself confutes the truth-value of 'Bangshi-Shiksha's report that Lord Chaitanya himself enjoined his disciple to practise a cult whose decorticated form is, as Bipin Goswami says, pure and simple Sahajiaa cult.]

### Prembilas

Sri Nityanandadas (Baidya) wrote about the life of Srinibas, Narottam and Shyamananda, in his book, 'Prembilas'. The author of 'Prembilas' has repeatedly mentioned one Jahnaba Birchandra, whom he accompanied to Brindaban and whose dictate has occasioned the writing of the book. He also exhorts that everything to be found in his book is unmixed truth and that his idol, Jahnaba dinned on him the intention of hers to get it done. So it was that the writer, who is modest enough to regret his deficiency of inspiration to embark on such a task, had willy-nilly to set about writing it out. It would appear from the above exordium that the book must be authentic. But, then, it was continually in the process of growth almost as inexorably as child Krishna did grow in Nanda's abode. For 'Premabilas', of course, the abode to grow was invariable the home of some or other Vaishnab.

Now, different copies of the manuscript of 'Prembilas' are traceable. The one at the disposal of Kandi's Kishorimohan Sinha has no more than 16 chapters. Similar is the copy made by Bishnupur's Rani Dhvajamani herself. The latter copy is preserved in Sahitya Parishad. Mr. Ramnarayan Vidyaratna, who published it, got eighteen chapters printed. In its second



edition he went up to chapter 20. Thereafter Mr. Jashodanandan Talukdar published an edition of the book comprising 24 chapters and a half. The author, Dr. Mazumdar proposes to examine the Talukdar edition, taking into consideration the number of pages as well. The word chapter, is here denoted by 'bilas' in every edition or copy of 'Prembilas'. But the first edition due to Talukdar had 18 chapters as against 16 in Dhvajamani's copy. The different versions, in question are all chapter-wise divided but in different ways. The Talukdar edition, for instance, treats of Srinibas's and Narottam's genealogy as late as in the twentieth chapter, Dhvajamani's copy being complete in sixteen. Let us reproduce a portion of that genealogical account as given in the Talukdar edition :

'Mor dikshaguru hoy Jahnaba Ishwari ॥  
 Je kripaa karila more kohite naa paari ॥  
 Birchandra pravu mor shikshaguru hoy ॥  
 Aamaare karuna tinho kaila atishay ॥  
 Mata Soudamini pita Atmaram Dass ॥  
 Ambastha kulete janma Srikhande baas ॥  
 Aami ek putre more raakhiaa balak ॥  
 Matapita donhe choli gela paralok ॥  
 Anath hoiaa aami bhaabi anibaar ॥  
 Raatrite swapan ek dekhi chamatkar ॥

(Phonetic note. Matapita is pronounced, maataapitaa. Atmaram is pronounced Atmaaraam, by the same token.)

English version :

Received initiator Jahnaba's endless grace  
 And tutor Birchandra's kind guidance.  
 Atmaram and Soudamini are my parents,  
 Ambastha for pedigree and Srikhande the native place.  
 Parents left me an orphan boy  
 A dream gave in my worries a wondrous joy.

The writer continues his personal account to tell us that his original name, Balaramdas, was changed to Nityanandadas by his idol (whom his fume of bhakti chokes naming). [He is wary of motive being imputed to his bookmaking. The path of least resistance is to implicate one's Guru in the fray. So Nityanandadas speaks of his teacher Birchandra and, of course, his object to cast all superlatives in the art of adulation at. And that object of utter and absolute worship is that Jahnaba. Note that the surname of Jahnaba is suppressed all along to supplant her family surname by 'Ishwari' (meaning a feminine divine) at the first chance his metre and rhyme gave him. 'Ishwari' rhymes in his verse with 'paari'. Flawless rhyme may be suspect when an unknown woman is turned – even for rhyme's sake – into an Ishwari.]

The conventional conclusion of a book with the writer's bio-data has not been the feature of 'Prembilas'. There occur four and a half chapters even after the writer's personal points. Besides, the declared objective of 'Prembilas' being the revelation of the spiritual feats of Srinibas, Narottam et al., who belonged to the post-Chaitanya era, it is difficult to see how Advaita, Nityananda and other contemporaries of Sri Chaitanya, figured so prominently in this book. 'The last four chapters of the book must be spurious', says Dr. Mazumdar.

That the last two chapters of Vidyaratna's book were counterfeit was the gist of a booklet published by a galaxy of scholars from Nabadwip, Shantipur, Brindaban, Kalikata et cetera. In the preface to the booklet they remarked that the 24 chapters of the original book were perforce condensed into 18. Rasbehari Sankhyatirtha had seen a copy of this book comprising 24½ chapters (vide proceedings of the Kashimbazar Sahitya Sammalen). The book, in question had been a hand-written copy.

The author, Dr. Mazumdar, found discrepancy between the Vishnupur Rani's copy and the printed edition due to Talukdar,

which was pretty copious too. One Thakurdas as wrote in the 'Sahitya' that the manuscripts of Prembilas were by and large in agreement among themselves while each differed from the printed edition due to Talukdar.

A well-known Vaishnab litterateur, Mr. Haradhan Datta, wrote an article in the 'Bishnupriya' (vide the issue of Ashwin 16, 408 Chaitanyabda 1893 A.D.)

An excerpt from that article follows :

'I possess a hand-written copy of 'Prembilas'. It must have been more than two hundred years old. The printed book differs at places with this manuscript. Even contexts differ. The tampering with the original version is not of recent origin— the process must have begun from olden days and by the intervention of, many a man. The book entails an in-depth study.'

The alarm-signal sounded by Mr. Datta has hung fire.

Dr. Mazumdar refers to Gurucharandas's 'Premamrita'. This person was the disciple of the second wife of Srinibas Acharya. Her name was Gourpriya. Gurucharan has written in that book such lines as point to its oldness and its contradiction at once. Consider, for instance the following two excerpts from 'Premamrita':

1. 'Nityanandadaser padadhuli shirenila १  
Taanr granthamate lilar anusaar paila ॥'
2. 'Jahnabar aajnabale Nityanandadas koile  
shesh lilar bistaar barnan १  
Taanr sutra mat loye Gurupada sparsha paaniaa  
gaay kichhu e gurucharan ॥'

English version :

1. He makes obeisance to Nityanandadas and hence  
He finds from his text lila-order details.

## 2. Jahnaba bid and Nityananda narrated –

Gurucharan states end-lila according as she 'd indicate.

[The author, Dr. Mazumdar, would be glad to obelize the portions of 'Prembilas' that 'owe' their origin to some celestial voice or dream-command. These have no historical value in his opinion.]

The book under consideration incorporates no fewer than 21 dream-commands. A dream sequence cannot be the history of one's waking state. What is even more fatal to its claim to genuineness is the disconcerting plethora of self-contradictions the writer has lapsed into. The following lines gleaned from the very first page of the book are plagued by contradiction :

'Nityananda pravuke Gourhe dila paathaaiaa ॥

Tenho Gourh bhaasaaila prembhakti diaa ॥

x — x — x

Keha kahe mukti binaa baakya naahi aar

Mukti kahi kahi Gosain bhaasaila sansar ॥'

English version :

Sent thereto Nityananda carries Gourh

On the wave of devotional love for sure.

Some contends – liberation is the sole aim.

So all are swept by this one Gosain by name.

The inconsistencies of 'Prembilas' are not hard to find. They are as follows.

1. How could Adwaita Gosain spread the liberation-doctrine if Nityananda had carried the people with him by his doctrine of devotional love? The chronological precision is not to expected of 'Prembilas'-writer. The report of Krishnada's suicide by a jump into Radhakunda, which occurs in the printed as well as the Rani-written copy is not true. The entire incident is a figment as has been shown earlier on (when we are treating

of 'Charitamrita'). Anachronism further impairs the reliability of the report as given in 'Prembilas'. The mention of 'Gopalchampu' indicates the fact that the book was not written before 1592 A.D., which implies that Srinibas returned to Bengal with a book written after 1592 A.D. His marriage followed his return. How is it, then, that 'Prembilas' speaks of his three sons and daughters being administered initiation-mantras? It is not at all possible for all three of them to be aged enough for that ritual. There is a declaration in the 24th chapter that the book was composed in 1601 A.D. In the twentieth chapter of the book the initiation of three sons (and no daughter) is described by the verse,

'Acharyer tin putre tinjane १

Mantra pradan korilen anadita mane ॥

[i.e., Three persons gave initiation

To (Acharya's) each different son.]

2. Srinibas Acharya's life is dealt with in 'Prembilas', 'Anuragballi' and 'Bhaktiratnakar'. But it is difficult even so to determine the dates of the major events of his life.

In the very first chapter of 'Prembilas' however, Sri Chaitanya, on enquiry about Chaitanyadas is said to receive the following information :

'Chakandite baas taanr ati shuddhaachaar १

Taanr dehe naahi kichhu paper sanchar ॥

Putra nimitta purascharan aaramvila १

Jagannathe raakhi tinho alpakale gelaa ॥

x — x — x

Ethaay Chaitanyadas bipra purascharan kare ॥

Shata purascharan koila Gangar samipe १

Swapnachhale aajnaa hoila gour barnarupe ॥



His wife says,

Aamar sharire dekha mahapurush adhistaan 1'

A gist of the lines quoted :

A chakandi man of pure spirit and flesh

Worships for having a son, and wends

To the Ganga to worship best for his ends.

He's a dream-command to find

His wife sure of a prophetic child.

Apart from this stereotype of a dream-command, there is a characteristic remark made by the writer himself which is, to be precise,

'Garvete prabeshmatra eta fal hoila

[i.e., 'How propitious the sequel

To the moment to her womb he fell!']

Dr. Mazumdar is kept guessing. He wonders what it may mean. Does the line, he asks, make a cryptic reference to Sri Chaitanya's advent and stay? In any case, the suggestion of Srinibas's birth during Sri Chaitanyalila is very much there.

According to 'Anuragballi'

'Pathe jaaite shuni mahapravur antardhaan 1

Murchhite pariaa bhume garaagari jaan 11'

[i.e., On his way he hears of Mahapravu's withdrawal—

Hence he tolls on the ground to faint off withal.]

'Bhaktiratnakar' has it too :

'Maner anande Srinibaser gaman 1

Katodure shunila Chaitanya sangopan 11'

The lines in Bengali just quoted mean :

Srinibas is cheerfully on his way,

Till of Chaitanya's withdrawal they say.

If, however, Srinibas was born in 1518 A.D., he could not possibly make for Puri all alone on the eve of Sri Chaitanya's

withdrawal, which was a matter of 1533 A.D. The report in Pulindas's 'Brindaban Kathaa' that Srinibas was born in 1519 A.D. tends to a firmer denial of that possibility. And Pulindas was not excogitating. His report was, in fact, based on a book (i.e., a diary) preserved in the house of some scion of Srinibas Acharya. Srinibas died in 1603 A.D. according to the above reference.

Srinibas is said not to have met Sanatan, Raghunath Bhat and Sri Rup according to the fifth bilas (chapter) verse of 'Prembilas', quoted here below :

'Prathamei Sanatan hoila aprakat ॥  
Taaha bohi Katakdin Raghunath Bhat ॥  
Sri Rup Goswami tabe hoilaa aprakat ॥  
Sharire naa rohe pran kare chhatfat ॥

—Prembilas, P. 31

English version :

Sanatan is the first to depart.  
Raghunath dies some time apart.  
Srirup Goswami's term comes next  
Before dying, he suffers pangs of death.

The series of death reported above came to the knowledge of Srinibas as soon as he reached Brindaban. Going by the family diary quoted by Pulindas, one fails to see how Srinibas failed to see the Brindaban Vaishnab – luminaries although he is said to have visited Brindaban when he was quite young? Sanatan died in 1554 A.D. Had Srinibas been born in 1519 A.D., he would have passed the limits of youth already when Sanatan died. [Note that they did not call a thirty-five year old quite young those days.] If Srinibas went to Brindaban in 1555, he was 36 then. But on P. 27 of 'Prembilas' (chapter 5), Srinibas, on the eve of making for Brindaban is referred to as a boy.

It is not known how long Srinibas stayed at Brindaban. Yet it is guessed that Bir Hambir was the Raja (big landlord) of Bishnupur at the time, when Srinibas was carrying the Goswami-shastra to Bishnupur on the completion of his schooling received at Brindaban. Nikhlnath Roy believes Bir Hambir became the Raja of Bishnupur in 1587 A.D. (vide 'The Bangabani', Agrahayan, 1329 B.S.), but Hunter thinks it was in 1576 A.D. But modern researchers have rejected the latter view, (vide Dr. Bhattashali in Appendix to Radhagobinda Nath Charitamrita, P. APP. 68)

The 'Goswami-shastra' is an alias for 'Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita' by Mr. K.D. Kaviraj. It was sent to Bengal for the favour of Bengal Vaishnabs' persusal. But it was snatched away by specially engaged men. Srinibas must be about 70, if not more at that time. He is said to have married a few years later. And on top of it, he is said to have been the father of six children. [One cannot possibly be taken in by a palpable nonsense of such egregious degree. A man marrying when on the wrong side of 70 is not supposed to be the father of six children. But what is the source of this anomaly if his marriage and his having six children be true? Well, the knot is about his date of birth as given in spurious works.]

Dr. Mazumdar gives to Mr. Radhagobinda Nath whose considered opinion is that Srinibas was not born any earlier than between 1572 and 1576 A.D. If he was born nearly 40 years after Sri Chaitanya withdrew, his encounter with Gadadhar Pandit, Narahari, Bishnupriya and Sita Debi as reported in 'Prembilas' proves a myth. In fact, a chronological scrutiny would reveal such anomalies galore in 'Prembilas', 'Anuragballi' and 'Bhaktiratnakar'. To take another instance, the death anniversaries of Sanatan and of Srirup are observed in Brindaban on dates separated by some 27 days. 'Prembilas' places Srirup's death four months later than Sanatan's.

Brindabandas has written that Nityananda left home at 12 but Prembilas makes it 14. And Brindabandas's 'Sri Chaitanya Bhagbat' contains (undoubtedly) the authoritative account of Nityananda's life.

'Prembilas' was composed by Nityanandadas wrote many things without taking the trouble to investigate their factuality. Even worse, later interpolations of tententious nature have outraged whatever truth the original writer of the mid - 17th century had found. It is not safe to trust such a mixture unless its contention is supported by some established author.

### **Bhaktiratnakar and Narottambilas**

Earnest devotees have held in esteem the book entitled 'Bhaktiratnakar'. Narahari Chakraborty wrote it. He has written about himself :

'Biswanath Chakraborty sarbatra bikhyaata ॥  
Taanr shishya mor pitaa bipra Jagannath ॥  
Naa jaani ki hetu hoila mor dui naam ॥  
Naraharidas aar Dasghanashyam ॥'

The quoted lines signify :

My Brahmin 'dad' is famous Biswanath's disciple  
My names are Haridas and Ghanashyamdas— who  
knows why double!

On pages 141 and 1018 of this book are references to the testimony of 'Anuragballi'. So it must be later than that 'Anuragballi'. The annotation of the 'Bhagbat' by Biswanath Chakraborty being completed in 1705, the 'Bhaktiratnakar' was presumably a work done in the first moiety of the 18th century.

It is said that the writer of the 'Bhaktiratnakar' worked as a cook at the Gobindaji's temple at Brindaban. His account of the tour of Brindaban undertaken by Srinibas at al shows his particular knowledge of the geography of the neighbourhood called Brajamandal. He finished reading all Vaishnab texts that

were current at the time in Brajamandal (and also the scriptures that were available). He has cited the authority of the writers of those works, quoting relevant excerpts therefrom. Some of those references are no longer extant. Gobinda Kaviraj's 'Sangit-Madhab-Natak' has been quoted on PP. 17, 19, 20, 33 and 34 of Narahari's book while Radhakrishna Goswami's 'Sadhan Dipika' has been quoted on PP. 89, 92 and 138, the corresponding pages for Nrisingha Kabiraj's 'Nabapadya' and Gopalguru's 'Padya' being 101 and 135, and 312 respectively. Also, Vedanta Garvaacharya's 'Padya' is cited (in except) on P. 127. He even used the hear-say reports current in the contemporary Vaishnav circles. These are two factors of his respectability to devotees.

There is one difficulty still. An 18th century book dealing with what happened in the 16th can scarcely be considered true a priori one has to weight its arguments and assess its factuality. Curiously, Narahari often adopted the technique of a 'third person narrative' by speaking in the mouth of a Brahmin of unknown antecedents words that described past happenings.

To take some examples of the actual technique, we consider the 11th chapter. The narrator says that Jahnaba Debi met one centenarian at the village, Ekchaka. She was accompanied by her uncle, Krishnadas Sarkhel and Murari Chaitanyadas, the latter being a disciple of Nityananda Raghu - Patibaidya Upadhyay and others were also in the company. That old man could not recall the name of Haro Pandit's father (i.e., Nityananda's grandfather.) He is therefore compelled to be vague as the following words uttered by him would show :

'Ei grame chhila ek bipra punyaban ।

Ojha khyati jani mane naai taar naam ॥'

English version :

An occultist of this village known to all –

This holy Brahmin's name I can't recall.



That Brahmin, reportedly, said that he had seen Nityananda's grandfather. The narrator was a boy at the time. He described the marriage of Nityananda's father, Padmabati being the bride. But he did not mention the name of Nityananda's grandmother. That report gives a new information that Nitai had a younger brother. (Vide P. 691)

The twelfth chapter has it that during Srinibas's tour of Mayapur off Nabadwip there came an old Brahmin who accosted him very respectfully. The meeting is described in the text by the verse,

'Aaisen ek briddha Bipra dhire dhire 1

Tanre pranamiyaa ati Sumadhur vaase u'

English version :

An old Brahmin, slow on his feet,

Curtsies and speaks, his voice so sweet.

The selfsame Brahmin narrated the life and the respective places of his lila. The Bhaktiratnakar incorporates that account. In fact, from page 713 to page 1000, this book literally takes over that exhaustive account itself. Narahari's Sri Chaitanya biography has no new material outside what Murari, Brindabandas and Krishnadas Kaviraj have recorded.

According to Bhaktiratnakar many devotees— some of them Sri Chaitanya's contemporaries — had assembled at the Grand Festivals held in Katwa and Khetri. Many would determine the life-time of Srichaitanya's devotees, who were coeval with the Lord himself, on the basis of the list of names occurring in the Bhaktiratnakar account of those festivals. But the pertinent question is on the truth of the inference that such festivals had a provision at all for checking in the participants (such as our present-day seminars would invariably have). Narahari himself refers to no such list of participants at Katwa and Khetri meets, which, ipso facto, renders his description pretty suspect. (Dr.

Mazumdar recalls at this point how inconsistent Narahari proved in respect of Srinibas's life-history. In fact, the author, Dr. Mazumdar, has already pointed to the conflicting remarks made by Narahari in that matter while he (Dr. Mazumdar) was reviewing 'Prembilas'. Considering all these, the author, Dr. Mazumdar, contends that whatever Narahari relates about Sri Chaitanya's devotees, who were associated with Sri Chaitanya himself as his contemporaries, may have no more than a hear-say value.

Narahari Chakraborty's 'Narottambilas' has little material about Narottam that is not found in 'Bhaktiratnakar'. Narahari's book also creates the impression that Srinibas and Narottam Thakur were born during Sri Chaitanya's life-time. On his way to Nilachal for the second time, Srinibas heard of the death of Gadadhar Pandit. At this, he cancelled the intended visit to Nilachal half-way to return to Gour. His immediate reaction at the sad news of Nityananda's and Adwaita's death is described by Narahari in the following terms :

'Pravate byakul hoiaa chale Gour pathe 1

Tathaa vet hoila Gourdeshi lok saathe 11

Pravu Nityananda Adwaiter sangopan 1

Taa savaar mukhe shuni hoilaa achetan 11'

[The verse quoted above is meant to convey the earnestness of feeling that Srinibas had for these celebrities by referring to his losing consciousness at the news of their deaths. In fact, Vaishnabs are not particularly known for their faith in self-restraint. A very showy form of Bhakti, weeping and dancing are certainly the kind of nervous frailties a true Yogi would decry as impediments to yoga. With Vaishnabs, however, neurotic excesses are hall-marks of sincere devotion.]

In any case, we feel that the above verse argues to the verse-marker's belief in the hear-say that Gadadhar, Nityananda and

Adwaita died each within a year or two of the passing of the Lord. [The author's own assessment puts the documentary worth of 'Narattambilas' at par with 'Bhaktiratnakar'.]

### Aviram Lilamrita

The book, 'Aviram Lilamrita' is said to recount the life of one Aviram, an associate of Nityananda. A High English School teacher, Prasannakumar Goswami compiled it in 409 Gourabda (i.e. in 1894 A.D.) Mr. Goswami has described one Ramdas, a disciple of Aviram, as the writer of the book, in question. This declaration of the authorship of the book is embodied by the following verse on P. 16 of the very book:

Sri Chaitanya Aviram pade jaar aash १

Aviram lilamrita kahe Ramdas ১১

The above couplet in Bengali signifies

For Chaitanya's feet and Aviram's his wish stays –

So Aviram's life this Ramdas narrates.

[The usual dream-command is flaunted in a typically Vaishnabic pride of modesty. In fact, a Vaishnab won't arrogate to himself the responsibility for writing a book he himself writes.

He would invariably have a dream-command administered by his own preceptor or some such departed Vaishnaba-celebrity. It will be to do the bidding communicated during his dream-experience that the dreamer will wake up to begin the writing. The idea is to show off the writer's modesty. He is made out to be one who is averse to showing off his skill of writing. It is under the compulsion that he says he has to write a book. The comic of the contrived humility is that it speaks volumes for the 'humble' writer's occult power to communicate with a departed spiritual celebrity in course of a dream-sequence. So his humility-show is marred by a blunt vanity of

spirituality of a sort in being a Guru's chosen man and also in being capable of having the power to communicate during sleep with the Guru. In point of fact, we presume, we may ignore the whole thing as an instance of 'much ado about nothing.' After all, its unlikely that scores of writers would have the same kind of dream-command.]

It is amusing to peruse the declaration of dream-command as averred by the 'original' writer, Ramdas :

'Ataeb jata lila kari je barnan ॥  
 Aapani likhaan moke kariaa jatan ॥  
 Aviram dehe sada Chaitanya bilas ॥  
 Pravu Nityananda mukhe Shuninu nirjaas ॥  
 Ekdin aami grihe kariaa shayar ॥  
 Aadha aadha nidra mor koila aakarshan ॥  
 Henakaale Nityananda kahen aasiaa ॥  
 Aviram lila lekha ekhan uthiaa ॥'

We give the following gist of the verse in Bengali :

What he dictates I write –  
 Nityananda gave me some hint  
 Of Aviram's life– then his dream-bidding  
 Made me complete the undertaking.

Since Prasanna Goswami, the compiler of this book did not allude to any old hand-written text, it stands to reason that he himself has written it, relying on some hear-says.

The alleged encounter of his Guru (Aviram) with Joydev is something that Ramadas himself would not contrive. (vide P. 25). Again the report that Malini was brought up in a non-Hindu family and that Aviram restored her from the bathing ghat (as given on P. 32) is another eviednce of its being suspect. On P. 51 is reported the 'fact' that Sri Chaitanya himself persuaded the Vaishnabs to accept Malini as Aviram's spiritual power, to wit,

Then Lord Chaitanya makes the observation—

'She's Aviram's Force; accept her without hesitation.

After this mandatory observation by the Lord Vaishnaba high-ups including twelve Gopals and sixty-four Mahantas consented to eat of food prepare by Malini. [The author, Dr. Mazumdar says that the hierarchical order comprising twelve Gopals and sixty-four Mahantas was not there in Sri Chaitanya's time. He undertakes to prove his point in a following discourse on Sri Chaitanya's entourage.]

A third objectionable point against the authenticity of the book is the episode of a priest of a Gopinath temple. The icon of Gopinath of that temple had to do with a disciple of Aviram. The important point is that the said priest was sexually aroused by a woman to such precipitous extent that he bid her undress herself completely and stand before him as a typical nude. The text describes the incident on P. 69 in very overt terms :

'Naaripaashe giaa tenha balen bachan 1

Bibastraa hoiaa tumi danrao ekhan u'

The lines in Bengali mean :

Approaching the woman he commands next;

'Stand now before me fully undressed.'

Cupidity had made the priest go off the deep end. But such impulses could not immobilize his good sense for long. He realized that to gloat a female figure in dishabille or — what is even worse — in the buff must be a sin for a temple-priest. In remorse he destroyed his sinister eyes thereafter. [The author sees nothing but a distorted version of Suradas's tale in this grotesque narrative.]

Finally, on P. 68 there is an allusion to Sita's grave malady at her son Achyut's death during Adwaita's stay at Puri in the company of Lord Chaitanya. The fact remains that Achyut's death did not occur during the lifetime of Sri Chaitanya or Adwaita. The entire report is a figment.



True, Aviram and Ramdas were important among Sri Chaitanya's associates. They had spiritual accomplishments as well. But the book, 'Aviram Lilamrita' has no semblance of reliability.

[As the translator-interpreter of Dr. Mazumdar's book, I have the following addendum in mind, which is meant to explain the author's observations on, and general attitude to, the books of doubtful authenticity. While these books bear only indirectly on the biography of Srichaitanya, of which there is no dearth, these are, per se, ignorable. This is what the reader may suspect to be the guiding idea of the author. Frankly, I have often softened the hard line criticism of these minor works which the author Dr. Mazumdar has preferred. The author missed the inherent Manichean aspect of every truth.

Indeed Sri Chaitanya represents an institution. If Murari and Brindabandas described the individual and his institutionlized image while he was in the land of the living, the dozen minor authors (of hardly identifiable personalities) have traced the shape of the institution after the departure of the path-finder. If some of the later Vaishnab celebrities failed to follow the holiest of the holy conduct-codes, the biographers as lesser mortals had to toe the line nevertheless for fear of ostracization. The reported feud between Pro-Sri Chaitanya and Pro-Nityananda elements was no chimera. I am of opinion that this first chasm in the institution was responsible for later degeneration of the creed into the cult of Sahajiya Sadhan. In every moral and religious movement, the off-shoots of the primary betray such pictures. The shape of Buddhism in Bengali was even worse. But that execrable stage saw the birth of Vaishabism even as Lord Ramkrishna and Sri Aurobindo schools of spirituality have emerged out of the ruins of the Sri Chaitanya school. One may take an objective view of these inevitables.]

## Chapter XV

### The Chaitanya — Lore á la Oriya Devotees

There had been a prevalent line of Vaishnab cult in Orissa prior to Sri Chaitanya's making over to Puri. In fact, not even one but two such lines of Vaishnabism obtained there. One was the cult of pure devotion inspired by the sanctum sanctorum—the Radhakrishna shrine. The other was the peculiar school of thought which saw Buddha in Jagannath and placated Buddha by a Jnanamarga and Jagannath by a Bhaktimarga by a twofold Sadhana of Jnana and Bhakti. While both the cults were absorbed by Sri Chaitanya, the second or the path of a sycretic Jnana and Bhakti maintained an independent institution without being integrated in the general scheme of Vaishnabism. Later on, Srinibas and Shyamananda together with his disciple Rasikananda popularized the Bhakti cult that had had its origin in the area known as Brajamandal. Incidentally, Shyamananda was an associate of Narottam.

A number of evidences exist, however, to suggest the custom of Krishna-worshipping being prevalent in Orissa well before Sri Chaitanya's advent there. The Remuna temple of Gopinath was a major centre of worshipping Krishna. Madhabendra Puri is on record having an ecstatic experience on beholding the Gopinath image. In Srirup's 'collected verses' one may persue six distichs or slokas written by Purushottamdev—the father of Prataprudra. If one would recover one particular sloka thereof, it would be an easy matter to decorticate the couplet and see that it is on Gopiprem. So the idea of Gopiprem was not unknown in Orissa even before Sri Chaitanya's arrival there. [Now, Gopiprem is an ideal loving devotion such as milkmaids or Gopis of Brindaban had for Krishna. In its later versions, thanks to wild and fleshy poesy

of Joydev and Chandidas Krishna-image god tarnished by carnal fancies. Even Radha became for these mundane poets a libidinous bond symbol. The translator is at a loss what to do about such monstrosities.]

It is known from Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita that Roy Ramananda was conversant with the Vaishnab way of Sadhana even before he received the grace of Sri Chaitanya. His play, 'Jagannathballav' has nothing of adoration to Sri Chaitanya, which implies its composition preceding his association with Sri Chaitanya. In this play is depicted the love-lorn devotion (of Vaishnabism of a particular kind) and the emotional tenor and its variations that are associated in the Vaishnab literature with Radha. It is inferred that love and devotion as Vaishnabs' *modus operandi* of Sadhana already prevailed in Utkal when Sri Chaitanya had not arrived.

Roy Ramananda had on one occasion sung one of his self-composed songs to Sri Chaitanya. Kabikarnapur and Krishnadas Kaviraj believed that the song in question was indeed Ramananda's composition. Ramananda's 'Brajabali' lyrics betray his acquaintance with Vidyapati's 'Padabali'.

Many Buddhists of Orissa resorted to Hinduism. But they could not entirely free themselves from the influence of their original faith. They took fancy to identify Lord Jagannath with Buddhadeb. Their conjecture evoked their admiration, and even devotion, to the deity. Their fancy had the power of contatenation to ever that Lord Krishna, who took the guise of Buddha, came to be known as Jagannath. [I do not so much as understand how such an outlandish apostasy of a Buddhist escaped the notice of Dr. Mazumdar. Buddha, who preached the goal of Nirvan could not deign to re-appear as Jagannath. Nor could Lord Krishna, who preached the path of selfless work, be fain to reincarnate as Buddha—the man who believed in nothing but nothingness.] [The author, Dr. Mazumdar

enumerates the twists and turns of the cult and the Sadhana of these Buddhists. They considered Buddha as a re-incarnation of Lord Krishna, the purpose of the rebirth being meting out condign punishment to sinners! The author does not explain what it means when he refers to these Buddhists' worship of the Formless by the help of Jantra. Now, 'Jantra' here must mean some occult number-trick or some such mystic ruse. But I am not very sure what it may be like.]

Some works by this community of Buddhists who turned to Hinduism, such as Jagannath Das's 'Raaskriraa', Balaramdas's 'Bata Abakaash' and 'Biraat Gita', Achyut's 'Shunya Samhita', subscribe to the aforesaid double equation between Lord Krishna and Buddha on the one hand and that between Buddha and Jagannath on the other. It is of interest nevertheless to note that Jagannath Das had greatly delighted Lord Chaitanya himself by his recital of the Bhagbat. The author, Dr. Mazumdar observes that the entire group (Panchasakhaa) held the Bhagbat in high esteem. Panchasakhaa was the generic sobriquet for the group of five authors—Jagannath Das, Balaram Das, Achyutananda, Ananta and Jashobanta Das. They were reputed each as writers of books in Oriya.

Jasobanta's grand-disciple (i.e., disciple's disciple), Sudarshan Das wrote in an unpublished book about Sri Chaitanya making a speech. A Raja was asked (by the poet) to listen to it attentively. But we are not informed of the theme discussed by Sri Chaitanya. Very irrelevantly we are given, instead, a catalogue of names—those of the quintet known as Panchasakhaa.

Achyutananda notes in the first chapter of 'Shunyasamhita' that Sri Chaitanya had intimacy with the said quintet, to wit,

'Vaishnabmandali Kholkartaal bajaai bolanti Hari ॥  
Chaitanya Thakur mahaa nrityakaar danda  
Kamanduludaari ॥

Ananta Achyut gheni Jasobanta Balaram Jagannath ।  
 E Panchasakhaahin nritya kori gale Gourangachandra  
 Sangat' ॥

The verse in Oriya just quoted means nothing much besides asserting Sri Chaitanya's participation in a devotional chanting-cum-dancing event where the five members of the Panchasakhaa group were all present.

The writer, in question, also stated that Sanatan Goswami gave him some counsel as enjoined by Sri Chaitanya. Krishnadas Kaviraj has not mentioned the incident. Yet the author says he finds no reason to doubt the veracity of Achyut. [In fact, the lines describing the matter have a soupcon of photographic record where even the banyan tree under which Sanatan held the sitting has been mentioned.]

The unpublished 'Chaitanyabhagbat' by Ishwardas reports that the deity, Jagannath, had given Achyut a dream-command to take initiation from Sri Chaitanya. Achyut himself refers to the incident in the sixth chapter of his 'Shunyasamhita':

Bolanti Pravu Bhagaban      Bouddha rupamo Chaitanya ।  
 Tanr Charan Seba karo      Bhaktir Pathanku aabora ॥

The verse quoted hereabove signifies :

The Deity says, Chaitanya manifests

Buddha—so be his servitor—tread a devotee's ways

Achyut's 'Shunyasamhita' read with Ishwardas's 'Chaitanyabhagbat' would suggest that Achyut had first sought initiation from Sri Chaitanya and that it was Sri Chaitanya himself that told him to be initiated by Sanatan.

Achyut, a milkman by caste was the son of Dinabandhu Khuntia and Padmabati, and was born at Tripur, a village in the district of Cuttack. He is the founder of the Gopal Math. (A Math is an Indian counterpart of a monastery.) Most men of the milkman caste of Orissa are disciples of this monastery.



Balaramdas (born at Chandrapur according to Ishwardas) was the son of a minister (of the Raja), Somnath Mahapatra. Sri Chaitanya met Balaram on his way to Cuttack (from Jagpur). Sri Chaitanya had accepted Sannyas (monkhood) just before this journey. Sri Chaitanya was Balaram's initiator according to the following distich in Ishwardas's Chaitanya Bhagbat :

'Ram Tarak Para Brahma Kahile Karne Sri Chaitanya i  
Shunina Balaramdas Manare hoila harasha u'

That is, Sri Chaitanya's word of mystic power  
Initiates Balaram, giving him rapture.

Balaramdas's claim to renown is due to his work, 'Jagmohan Ramayan'. Dibakardas writes that Balaramdas was Sri Chaitanya's all-time servitor. [A fantastic report due also to Dibakardas goes without the author's comment. Dibakar writes that Jagannathdas's recital of the Bhagbat so enraptured Sri Chaitanya that he remained immobile, hugging him for two livelong days and a half again! Dr. Mazumdar makes no comments perhaps because such hyperboles need none such. They are palpably absurd. The Pravu (Lord Chaitanya) asked Balaram to initiate Jagannath, then about 24. On the basis of this report, Jagannath must be Sri Chaitanya's own age. It is recorded in the third chapter of 'Jagannath Charitamrita' that Jagannath would have the Pravu's mouth washed in the morning and would serve him ( as a factotum perhaps would!) I find these reports hard to believe Real Greats of spirituality seldom use a disciple as a Roman tyrant would his serf! These stories are contrived to stress the genuineness of discipleship!]

Jagannathdas's 'Bhagbat' won general admiration in Orissa. We translate a brief passage (in this regard) from Tarinicharan Rath's work in Oriya, 'Utkal Saahityer Itihaas' (i.e., Oriya literature's history) : 'The founders of that cult are Jagannathdas, the poet of devotion, and, of course, the one of noble soul, Sri Chaitanya. The two together have evoked the

profound emotion of love and devotion in the heart of the resident of Utkal.'

Ishwardas contents that Ananta Mahani (das) received a dream-command from the sun-god of Konarak that he had to take initiation from Sri Chaitanya. It was also at Konarak that he had the good fortune to see Sri Chaitanya. He prayed for Sri Chaitanya's grace. But Sri Chaitanya asked Nityananda to initiate Ananta. Jashobanta, whose similar dream experience involved the deity, Jagannath, had, however the bonanza of having initiation from Sri Chaitanya himself.

There is, according to the author, Dr. Mazumdar, no denying that quintet of devotees known as Panchasakha were graced by Sri Chaitanya. True, they had not got the better of their Buddhist leanings even thereafter. Moreover, the Bengal Vaishnab literature extends little recognition to them. Yet they were noble men. It is not fair to suspect the honesty of purpose and the veracity of their statements. One need not suspect their disciples either. While their sincerity is unquestionable, one must not lose sight of the fact that the group had not so much as adopted the cult of love of Braja in its entirety.

The real metaphysical outlook and the corresponding religious conviction of these Buddhists-turned-Chaitanyavites would be revealed when one considers the following excerpt from Achyut's Shunyasamhita :

'Kohili mu shunyamantra jantra karanyas ॥  
Tapi maane joy joy fale je prakaash ॥  
Dekhile je Shunya Brahma swang jyoti hoi ॥  
Ghate ghate bije ehi shunya kaayaa gehi ॥  
Sthabar jangan keet Patangaadi jete ॥  
Shunya kaayaa shunya mantra bije ghate ghate ॥  
Shunya kaayaku je niraakaar jantra Saar ॥  
Bhala dayaakale dirgha jananka saadar ॥'

—Shunyasamhita

## English Version :

I canted the Sacred Word, Nihil and made  
 Occult feats of 'Nyas' that beget  
 Spiritual vision to show the Nihil's face  
 Behind every vessel—immutable or liable to change.  
 In each insect too is the glow of Nothingness.  
 One adoring in everything the formless transcendence  
 Has to this supreme knowledge a sure access.

[The irony of Buddhism is that its supreme knowledge is supreme nescience. The life Divine by Sri Aurobindo resolves the difficulty faced by Buddha and Shankara. They were mistaken in regarding a mental vision of nothingness or illusion as the ne plus ultra of spiritual knowledge. The Vedic seers, Lord Krishna, Sri Chaitanya, Lord Ramkrishna and, particularly, Sri Aurobindo had gone far beyond Buddha and Shankar's highest point of realization. To each of them the world was real but a yet imperfect reality because it partially reveals and partially conceals the ultimate reality—God—that upholds and sustains its half-baulked reality. A sadhaka must know his soul and must not trust to the limited consciousness of the mind in deciding on ontological issues. Or else, he would be stuck, like Shankara or Buddha, to the slough of Despond. The final pilgrimage of the human soul must involve a power that is even beyond the soul. This is what Sri Aurobindo's Supramental Yoga stands for. I feel I must not hesitate to expound obscure metaphysical points for which the author, Dr. Mazumdar, seldom expatiates on. The keen reader will notice in what I write on these recondite issues an echo of Sri Aurobindo's magnum opus as I have frequently admitted.]

Dr. Mazumdar came by a book on Tantra which was there in the Muktimandap library. It bore the title of 'Krishna-Premrasachandra tattwa-bhakta-lahari' with an optional title of

'Sri Chaitanya-Sarbavoum-Sangbad'. It consisted of 85 hand-written pages made of Palmyra leaves and of a human palm size each. Dr. Dinesh Sen, Rakhal Das Bandyopadhyay et al. examined the copy and concluded that it was some 250 or more years old. Possibly some Buddhist admirer of Sri Chaitanya wrote it. But the manuscript bristles with mistakes, which makes it a difficult study.

[I do not think it would be particularly useful to quote those slokas which betray clumsy metaphysics and callous solecism. I shall dwell, instead, on what I have called the clumsy metaphysics posited by the slokas.]

Sarbavoum here asks Sri Chaitanya the nature of Brahman. According to the book, in question, Sri Chaitanya speaks of the unitary essence of all things being Brahman. Coming to the eighth 'Prakaran' (i.e., topic) of the book, one learns that Sarbavoum admires Sri Chaitanya as the bestower of all that is good and blissful and the dispenser also of all spiritual faculties. It is difficult to decipher the writing of the book, which, if properly cracked might give some information about the form Sri Chaitanya's teachings took in Utkal. [The book composed on Palmyra leaves has a feature that is more or less common in the works by the Buddhists admirers of Sri Chaitanya. A metaphysical Shunyabad is found in peaceful co-existence with a devotion to Sri Chaitanya. 'Shunyasamhita' and 'Jhumarsamhita' explicitly describe Sri Chaitanya as Buddha's Avatar or incarnation. As the interpreter of Dr. Mazumdar's book, I must add that the very idea of Buddha's Avatar is a travesty of the notion of Avatarbad. God alone can have Avatars. Even granting Buddha the privilege of Avatarhood, it is very queer to fancy Sri Chaitanya himself as the Avatar. In any case, the Panchasakha view-point has nothing in it to parallel the philosophy of Bengal's Vaishnabs. But the emphasis on love and devotion as forms of Sadhana is a point

of agreement nevertheless between the Oriya devotees known as Panchasakha and the Vaishnabs of Gour or Bengal at large.]

### Ishwardas's 'Chaitanya Bhagbat'

It was by the courtesy of Prof. Artaballav Mahanti that Dr. Mazumdar could persue Ishwardas's 'Chaitanya Bhagbat' which is preserved, in duplicate, in the Praachi Samity Library at Cuttack. Two lines of successive Gurus—one from Sri Chaitanya to Ananta and the other from Matta Balaram to Kahnudas—are described in this book. But these do not disclose the Guru-line to which Ishwardas himself belonged. Assuming an average tenure of 25 years for a Guru, the author estimates the time when Ishwardas's work was in progress. He places the writing in the latter part of the 17th or the earlier part of the 18th century A.D. Mr. Pravat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, who conjectures Ishwardas's work to be a matter of the latter part of the 16th century, has, however, evinced nothing in defence of such conjecture.

It is usually the case that hear-says about luminaries of any field gain in quantity and oddity with time that elapses after their departure. There being no contemporaries in the land of the living, a whole world of fancy is let loose. Ordinarily, these gossips are born of people's love of superlatives as expressions of their hero-worship. If the hero be a spiritual genius, nothing short of bizarre tales of miracles performed by the deified hero can satisfy the admirer. This is how hagiology makes a difficult study where the profusion of hear-says about the saint's miraculous feats befogs the historical elements of the biography.

Now, Dr. Mazumdar points out that the copious instances of queer hear-says in Ishwardas's book argue to the writer's being a man of the late 17th century rather than of the 16th. For it is often the case that the greater the time-lag between a person's



death and the writing of his biography, the more numerous are such hear-says that infiltrates therein.

Of course, Ishwardas keeps up the tradition of exculpating himself if one would fault his work. As usual, he also passes the buck to Lord Jagannath whose 'command' emboldened him to venture on the book making. While Ishwardas was engaged in writing this book, the word passed among men of religious curiosity that Sri Chaitanya's departure was really his merger in the Jagannath image. Very effusively, therefore, Ishwardas describes that immersion of solid into solid—of a living human into a wooden icon—as though he was a witness to the marvel!

[Dr. Mazumdar's interest is in the date, authorship and practical details of men's lives. I find it embarrassing to note that an author of a critical review of a biography of a spiritual doyen is almost indifferent to anything Suprasensory. I am constrained to fill in the gaping gaps left by the author. A word of explanation for such miracle-*tales* as Lord Chaitanya's immersion, merger or extinction (or whatever term you choose) in Jagannath's image. After all, the writer, Ishwardas, of a reputed work is not numskull. How is it that these respectable writers are among those taken in by rumour-mongers? The point is that many have a very fallacious notion of the functioning of the spiritual power. First, it is not as powerful as these credulous people believe. God's omnipotence and a Yogi's spiritual power are not of the same rank. Even God is limited by the natural limit of the world on which and in which He is to work. For example He cannot spiritualize everyone, because few have the capacity for bearing the spirit. Again, God will not unmake what He Himself has made. He will not violate the universal laws governing Matter, Life and Mind. Exceptions to this rule are not for a human being to demand from Him. If compatible with His original purpose, He may—rarely albeit—modify or even topsy-turvy any of the 'rigid' laws of physics, biology or psychology. Generally, the

Yogi acts even more agreeably with Natural Laws. Now, solid—solid solution is possible in physics but a mass conservation is an inexorable law here. If Lord Chaitanya had merged in the Jagannath figure, his body-weight would not vanish for that matter. Did the image of the deity weight much more forevermore? Spiritual knowledge and power transcend the mind always but they seldom transgress it. In fact, the spirit marks a fuller state of the mind. They are not as antipodal as some over zealous devotees fancy. It is known that intuition of the spirit fulfils logic of the mind more often than not—although it has a richer and a finer and a more direct truth-vision. On the power side we have a very analogous relation between the spirit and the mind. And miracles are not violation of the terrestrial law. They simply mean a projection of a higher (supraphysical) law upon the physical—Fortunately true devotees intuit the truth that a hunt for miraculous power for its own sake is an impediment to the Yoga, since such craze for power or even such interest in them must spring from a narrow egoistic consciousness. So the rumour about Sri Chaitanya's extinction need not be taken seriously.]

[Ishwardas commits the same fallacy of calling Sri Chaitanya an Avatar of Buddha. In fact, Avatarhood is ruled out by Buddhism. Later Buddhists never what Buddha had taught. In fact, Buddha had negated God, world, soul, life and all that appears to exist. His idea of ultimate reality was non-existence or Asat—a zero, a nihil! If Sri Chaitanya be considered an Avatar, he must be considered an Avatar of God, and not of one who does not even believe in God. Buddha had no idea of the evolution of consciousness. So he failed to see the mystic purpose of the worldly life through cycles of death and rebirth whereby the soul evolves.]

The author, Dr. Mazumdar, gives a list of inaccuracies about the life of Sri Chaitanya and also about the lives of his associates. Most of these relate to names of relatives of Sri

Chaitanya's parents. Ishwardas says, Bishwanvar was born after five daughters of Sachi had died successively while Murari Gupta speaks of eight such. According to Ishwardas, again, Nityananda was a cousin (of a sort) of Sri Chaitanya. Similar anomalies about Nityananda's marital relatives have been detected. Gour-based Vaishnab literature calls Adwaita an Avatar of Shiva; Ishwardas changes Shiva into Radha. [Note that a deity does not appear in a human garb. So both views are queer.] Ishwardas says, Sri Chaitanya graced Nanak. This is not confirmed by Sikhs or Vaishnabs. A survivor of Nanak became devoted to Sri Chaitanya—so writes Ishwardas. This is an altogether startling bit of news again. No document on Sri Chaitanya's life mentions, the name of Keshab Bharati's Guru. But Ishwardas hazards a lineage of hab Bharati's Guru as done an Assamese text on hagiology. Dr. Mazumdar discounts either report. There is no agreement between the two either. Ishwardas also writes that Prataprudra and his wife became Sri Chaitanya's disciples as per Lord Jagannath's command. In contrast with Brindabandas's report, Ishwardas writes that Prataprudra was in Cuttack when Sri Chaitanya first arrived in Orissa and that he also paid a visit to Sri Chaitanya. Though of little authenticity, this is one of the very few biographies in Oriya of Sri Chaitanya. It deserves publication for that matter.

### **Dibakardas's Jagannathcharitamrita**

A rough idea of a devotee's period of active life is found when one can ascertain his Guru lineage. From such a study, Dr. Mazumdar concludes that Dibakar must be senior to Ishwardas, the gap being marked by a couple of generations. Jagannathdas, a contemporary of Sri Chaitanya was, on the other hand, senior to Dibakar by a clear margin of four generations. So it is that, Dr. Mazumdar would like to place him in the mid-17th century. Incidentally, our author does not

take seriously the observation made by Mr. Kumudbandhu Sen that Dibakar was the disciple of Jagannath. Mr. Sen's article on the matter was published in the Prabasi (vide its Baisakh number of 1341 B.S.). Dibakar's version of his own Guru-lineage (whereon the author, Dr. Mazumdar, bases his calculation) occurs in the first chapter of his 'Jagannathcharitamrita'. The first seven chapters of the book under consideration contains some material on Sri Chaitanya's life.

One such incident—as reported by Dibakar—is the token appreciation accorded to Jagannath for his service by Sri Chaitanya himself who, reportedly, tied his own stole to Jagannath's head. The incident is described in the third chapter of the book.

The fourth chapter makes references to Sri Chaitanya's devotion to the deity, Jagannath. It is reported that Lord Chaitanya visited the deity's image four times daily and made obeisance to that twelve times every day.

The Jagannathdas-community is known as 'Atibaraa' community. The devotees use the epithet as complimentary. But it has a pejorative undertone connected with its early history. Lord Chaitanya disowned Jagannath when it was disclosed how he, dissembling as a woman gave initiation to ladies of Prataprudra's palace. It was to denounce his dissimulation and the consequent approach to women's salon that Sri Chaitanya called him 'Atibara'. ['Atibara' seems to the translator a variant of the English idiom, 'too clever by half'.] The story of Jagannath counterfeiting and incurring Sri Chaitanya's displeasure was related to Dr. Mazumdar by one official of an Oriya monastery.

Dibakar, who attributes some halo to the term 'Atibara' says that Bengalee devotees Sri Chaitanya were green with envy, when the complimentary term was conferred on Jagannath



rather than on one of them. As they failed to free Lord Chaitanya from his Oriya devotees, they left for Brindaban. Lord Chaitanya was determined not to leave Lord Jagannath. So he stayed in Orissa. Dr. Mazumdar disbelieves the entire report, since Sri Chaitanya's devotees were not mean or jealous at all. What Dibakar says is all moonshine.

The Bengal group retaliated in its own way. They adopted a policy of black-out toward those Oriya devotees of Sri Chaitanya who would not toe the Braja-line of worship and rituals. The fissure between the two groups has left a schism in the otherwise connected account of the Vaishnab literature.

### **Gourkrishnoday Kaabyam**

That the book, 'Gourkrishnoday' by Gobinda Deb was composed in 1680 shak. has been reported by Mr. Bimalaprasad Siddhanta Saraswati and verified by Dr. Mazumdar who looked over a copy of the book in the Oriya Math at Puri. The book is written in the manner of Krishnadas Kaviraj's book, 'Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita'. The narratology and the collation of events of the later work resembles the earlier and better known biography of the Lord. But the critique or the critical review is absent in Gonbinda Deb's book. There is an acknowledgement of Gobinda's indebtedness to Krishnadas. In fact, at the end he even admits :

'Sri Gourchandracharitamrita Sarsindhoh

Sangdunya kinchidiha me hridi bindumatram.'

[The book is written in Sanskrit. The sloka quoted purports to characterizing the book as no more than a diminutive attempt to express what the author's mind could glean out of the oceanic volume of Krishnadas, the amount so gleaned being just a jot or tittle and no more.]

Some of the entries of the work are, however, extraneous to Krishnadas's work. Take, for example, the story of Sri



Chaitanya refusing to suck mother's milk for the first three days after his birth and the equally strange story of the baby-Chaitanya feeding thereon right from the moment of Sachidevi's initiation under Guru Adwaita, where the initiation took place just after the said three day period was over. Nothing of the kind occurs in Krishnadas's book. Again, Gobinda Deb's book refers to the testimony of the 'Baayupuran' in support of Sri Chaitanya's Avatarhood. The matter is dealt with in the eighth chapter of the book. But Dr. Mazumdar discounts it as a case of interpolation.

Dr. Mazumdar collected the references on Sri Chaitanya's life by Oriya devotees. Kanai Khuntia was a contemporary of Sri Chaitanya. His book must have some historical worth. But, then an American tourist bought it away.

## Appendix I

### On the Authenticity of Srichaitanya Biographies

#### Generalities :

The first volume of the English version of Dr. Bimanbehari Mazumdar's book in Bengali on the biographies of Sri Chaitanya deals largely with the standard texts. Naturally, the coverage given to these standard works each was copious. The details were sometimes rather taxing to an uncritical reader, if any. Yet there was the silver line even for the casual reader. For there was the relief that polemics or controversies were sparse—indeed too sparse in one's view if one remembers the five long centuries that separate us from those standard biographers. It was an age of hand-written manuscripts passing for books. The printing technology has not only helped the reader to come by a copy of a favourite book but has benefited the author by the feed-back supplied by the keener readers. The constant interplay between the author and the critical reader is a safeguard against subjective folly of the former. A revised and amended edition following constructive criticism by scholastic readers was unknown in the time of Brindabandas or Murari Gupta. Yet these biographers were of exemplary precision. If they had not fully succeeded in depicting Sri Chaitanya's inner mystic life, it was none of their fault. No human agency can cope with the suprahuman marvel of a life that was Lord Chaitanya's. Their merit is fully proven by the faithful representation of the outer life of the Lord. They did that well enough because the outer front even of an Avatar has a great deal of apparent resemblance with better specimens of lesser mortals. It redounds to the credit of the old-time biographers of Lord Chaitanya that their works were by and large consistent among themselves.

With the passage of time, however, devotees of the Lord became numberless and his biographers numerous. With each more distant than the other from the time when the Lord was in the land of the living, the quality of the work did deteriorate as would a river that collects more silt as it flows farther from its life-source—the glacier. The second and the third volumes of the present work of translation of Dr. Mazumdar's work concern those biographers of Lord Chaitanya, who have set about venturing on their self-imposed tasks at a time when the living memory of Sri Chaitanya and his associates had to be supplanted by dubious testimonies. To draw on the analogy of the river again, these later biographies had more dross as they stood farther from the source—the eye-witness of Sri Chaitanya's life. It is in respect of these works of dubious authenticity that Dr. Mazumdar's critical faculty and historical precisianism are to be particularly appreciated. To a mission of restoring the truth of the Lord's outer life there can be nothing that is trivial. Indeed on several issues to which we would attach no importance, Dr. Mazumdar has spent his time and energy in such absorbing manner as a dedicated scientist would for testing a hypothesis.

The crucial point about biographies of Lord Chaitanya through centuries is its bearing on the culture of a section of the nation. It is by no means a matter of literary history alone. For the person concerned is even more than Emerson's 'Representative Man' or that Bernard Shaw's 'Man of Destiny'. The person being Sri Chaitanya, his life-history as composed in different centuries reflect the twists and turns of the life of the nation that have shown up through years. The ideal upheld by a path-finder is never followed by his admirers in toto. Tastes and capacities even of sincere devotees vary. On top of it is the subjective factor of a biographer whose preferences tend to distort the very essence of the ideal represented by the path-

finder. Since a biographer cannot ignore the influence of his own time with a different life-style and a new sort of culture, there must crop up a difference between the portraiture of a Lord Chaitanya by a contemporary and by another separated by say, three centuries from the former. If anything original has to be said about Lord Chaitanya by a later biographer that has not been said by Murari or Brindabandas, for instance, the new biographer has to excogitate. If he is overly fond of originality, his work must turn out to be a tissue of lies. The point is that what was true about Sri Chaitanya was already recorded by the aforesaid authors. Obviously, later writers preferred a fancied novelty to the repetitive factuality. The early 16th century when Sri Chaitanya was in the land of the living and the mid-18th century when West Asian and European infiltrations into the socio-cultural fabric presented a spectacle altogether unknown in the past had a kind of communication-gap between its inhabitants of the two periods. The 18th century—the century of Voltaire on European soil—was for Indians no age of reformation. It was typical of a pre-capitalist decadence. We are in the midst of a ‘senile capitalist’ decadence. The low key of morals, however, marks either variant of decadence. A Puritan is, after all, not supposed to distort the life-history of one whom historians of Indian religion honour as a humanist and a moralist of the highest order and whom men of piety consider an Avatar. One cannot but appreciate the painstaking research undertaken by Dr. Mazumdar which had gone into his discovery of the date-tampering of later book making on Sri Chaitanya's life. ‘Old is gold’. Whether it is some unethical liquor or some work of the genre of hagiology, people invariably adore the old and spite the new. So it is that a 19th century tamperer of Sri Chaitanya biography would glibly spread the lie that the writer belonged to the late 16th century or the early 17th! It is not only the date of composition that is

shrouded in the fog of falsehood. The relation of various servitors to the Lord has been distorted. The same distortion marks their account of the 'spiritual power' of different associates of Sri Chaitanya. The writer of the Nityananda-lineage would tend to write things about Nityananda that would divinise the man, in question. A number of Adwaita-fans have clarified Adwaita, where some of them are scions of Adwaita himself.

How is it that people are sometimes too credulous to question the advertised divinity of ordinary human beings such as Adwaita or Nityanand? The propagandists, who wish to preen on the borrowed plumes for reason of their descendants of Adwaita or Nityananda, as the case may be, know that simpletons, who have the conviction that an Avatar always comes strong with godlike men, would be easily taken in. A god-man does not find interest in procreating half a dozen offsprings such as Adwaita did! True. Vivekananda beside Lord Ramkrishna and the Mother beside Sri Aurobindo would justify the popular belief. I, for one, won't believe even so that a Nityananda is a Vivekananda's compeer. The agnosticism of Dr. Mazumdar serves him right in giving a lie to the putative godliness of Adwaitas. One may wonder who provided the financial support to these canard-mongers. Well, the permanent settlement let may aristocrats spawn. And it is to them that the mushroom growth of fake Purans and false biographies of Sri Chaitanya or of Adwaita that we must point the minatory finger here. Certainly, there were right-thinking aristocrats also. Did not Kaliprasanna Sinha bear the expenses of a hundred Pundits who were engaged to translate the original Mahabharat into Bengali? Did he not act heroically, paying off the penalty imposed by a law-court on Mr. Long for his indulging in the translation of the fiery 'Nildarpan' by Dinabandhu Mitra? But, then, one swallow does not make a summer. Many of the



parvenu-community would engage writers to extoll the spirituality of their ancestors or their Gurus.

As pointed out, lack of contemporaneity and predilection for deifying one's ancestor whenever that ancestor was somehow linked with the Vaishnab cult—these were the major factors contributing to fairy-tale life-histories of those Vaishnabites. As a matter of fact, we will present in this volume amusing specimens of hagiology, which in a nursery rhyme would pass round as fairy-tales or legends. When one is prepared to swap truth with vain boast for one's ancestry, one would not hesitate to dish out preposterous stories of a basil-leaf being brought down the Ganges from one holy place of Uttar Pradesh to another in West Bengal by the sheer will power of the miracle-man. Invariably, the miracle-man is an associate of Lord Chaitanya or, as a second choice, a contemporary of some of his disciples of the second or third generation of Guru-lineage.

While such high-strung miracle-tales do lift the image of an Adwaita in the unregenerate mind of an uncritical reader, the unscrupulous author has bear the excoriating criticism by our author, Dr. Mazumdar. While reviewing these baseless biographies of Chaitanya associates, Dr. Mazumdar does not even hold his punch. Why must he when even names of Adwaita's sons are different in different writers' view! One recalls Mrs. Barbara Wootton's witty remark in 'Lament for Economics' : 'Where ever six economists are gathered, there are seven theories'. This remark made on P. 14 of her book may occur to a reader of these unkempt biographies several times in course of the perusal.

It is important to remember in this connection the remarks made by the author, Dr. Mazumdar, on the three distinct kinds of Sri Chaitanya biographies. While we need not reproduce that material, which forms the content of the first chapter of Vol. I of this book, we may do well to remember that is one's

philosophical outlook that determines the kind of biography of men like Lord Chaitanya. Now, most writers treated of in this volume have a common turn for miracle-tales. Some of them, again, are so enamoured of such miracle-tales spun albeit by the writers themselves, that they had not second-thought for their credibility. Neither did they trust to their own common sense. Any bias is apt to blur one's reasoning. An overdose of a bias for miracles blunts both reasoning and common sense. As the Guru preaches, so the disciple believes. If these devotees of unconfirmed identity cash go to spread a lie about a generally respectable Guru, Adwaita, should we infer that Adwaita, despite his scholarship was himself fascinated by the possibility of superhuman powers of a spiritual personage? Did Adwaita wink at the canard being spread that his miraculous power had brought a basil-leaf down the Ganga all the way from U.P. to West Bengal in order to enable Sachidevi bear a normal male-child. Did he mean to claim that his magic leaf of basil lifted the curse that plagued Sachi's earlier issues—all females—by infantile mortality? It is impossible to affirm or deny, since we have no evidence at all to indict or exculpate any.

But we have ample theoretical evidence to give a lie to the basil-leaf tale even when we cannot solve the liar's paradox in the sense that we do not know the source of the lie. It would be incorrect, however, to consider the present translator a heretic. I do believe that a part of a man may do the yoga and another part covet power, lust-satiation and fame-hunt. There are many learned authors who hold Nityananda in esteem for his devotion, while regretting his advances to Jahnnabi and other women. A more serious hear-say about this man has been alluded to in the first volume of this book. So one cannot dismiss anything *prima facie*. If, however, one is intent on heightening famed men at any rate, one may lay it at the door of the shadow-writer, who under an assumed name and a

contrived biodata, overstated the yogic feats of his hero. I am averse to such oversimplification for the following reason (given in an abstract form) : suppose Y is a disciple or an admirer of a spiritual leader X. It is, then, absurd to confirm or infirm a priori the universal proposition that 'all over statements made by Y about X's spirituality are solely a matter of Y's choice with no responsibility devolving therefor on X.' This is because there may be an instance of such a Y as would hate to tell a lie about his hero, X, even when the lie is meant to augment the public image of X. It is no longer impossible for some such veracious Y to indulge a false miracle-lore if and when X himself lets it pass round. The logic of 'ipse dixit' blinds Y, and he tells a lie believing he tells the truth because for him whatever X allows is a priori tenable, true and sublime!

An even more important question is : 'How do I rule out the possibility of the basil-leaf and consider it a tendentious lie?' Whoever may be the original liar, the episode is a lie as I have argued. It behoves me, then, to vindicate my stand-point. Yet the merit of this argument cannot be adjudicated in the court of our ear, nose and eye, bearing as it does on (suprasensory) realms of the occult. Those who have some idea about the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo would find it hard to believe that a yogic power of a yogi of the kind of Adwaita can change the physiological tune of a married woman. Even far greater Yogis than Adwaita proved powerless when it came to changing the physical consciousness. To change the mode of functioning of a system of physical organs that determine the normal and the pathological features of obstetrics is even more difficult a proposition. A yogi living in the soul-consciousness or better, in the supramental state—may achieve it. To attribute such supernal faculty to Adwaita is perhaps too much of a good thing even for one who believes that over-complimenting one's Guru is a good thing. I do remember, however, that Swami

Vivekananda had blessed the Maharaja of Kshetri so that he became a proud father within a year of the Swami's grace being bestowed. But Chaitanya or Vivekananda are ineffable. Leave them to their divinity. My argument cannot apply to these finest specimens of God's supreme craftsmanship! Did not God make them in His own image. And God certainly can cure a woman's sterility or other gynaecological disorder by a soft but sure wave of thought. Vivekananda, who lived God and even breathed God, was Godlike in every matter. Leave him alone. Let no translator of a biographical critique poke his nose there!

The basil-leaf fib is not the acmé of lie zealous devotees of Adwaita and his wife, Sita, have spread. Some writers have seized these to go one better. Thus Sita has been described by a writer as one who would transmute the sex of her male devotee in such a consummate measure as to cause regular menstruation in than 'male turned female' or perhaps an epicene! The rationale of the strange transmutation, according to these canard-mongers was the surfeit of emotional love a woman feels for Lord Krishna! So, the more males turn into females, the greater the output of Bhakti!

Since a translator of any dated work has to re-interpret some of the things of the original to match the taste of the new age, I must not baulk at exploring the socio-cultural factors responsible for such wild miracle-mongering. The first must be an over-cautious defence of spirituality against the mundane, non-spiritual trend of the post-Chaitanya era. On the one hand, it was the beginning of a protracted spell of universal materialism presaged by science and commerce; on the other, Hindus had to devise ways to stall the steady wooing of Islam by the lower placed sections of the Hindu population. While Sri Chaitanya had stopped the said erosion of Hinduism among the sections concerned by his superior humanism and spiritual love, lesser preachers appealed to the awe and reverence the



laity invariably had towards miracle, magic, thaumaturgy and occult crafts. Lord Chaitanya gave a simple recipe of singing hymns in praise of Hari. He knew that the commonalty would fail to do the occult processes entailed by the Yoga. His method worked and his creed of Vaishnabism spread like wild fire. But two hundred years later his original doctrine of love naturally lost some of its force. And a new formula—that of miracle-making through Vaishnabism—was mooted by most writers of the life of some or other associate of his. Still later there rose to eminence biographies of lesser known Gurus done by their devotees. These devotees had the feeling that the glory of Vaishnabism being a righteous target, there could be no great sin if they overshot the target and indulged excogitated overstatements. If materialism or its overdose compels humanity to the opposite end of the spirit, it is plausible to assume that such lores of fake miracles would compel the abler ones to try and see how far these lores of occult power are testable or, if possible, even verifiable. All roads of Yoga—true or false—must ultimately lead to the true blue—the spiritual truth. This is why one must bear with crude lies about sex-transmutation and all that.

These things were, understandably, outside the interest of Dr. Mazumdar. For he was, like Dinesh Sen, another admirer of Sri Chaitanya, the humanist. He faulted Dinesh Sen for his agnosticism while he himself shared the same philosophy. There is no harm in agnostic silence over the supra-physical provided the writer is particular about the outer life alone. This being the case with Dr. Mazumdar, we are gratified. After all, an agnostic is indifferent, while an atheist sceptical, in his attitude to occult power spiritual vision and all that. Dr. Mazumdar is more interested in factual details such as the persons present at a given meeting and the date of its occurrence. This spirit of research is what redounds to the acclaim our author commands.



What I have been driving at appears, however, to be an even more difficult investigation of the spiritual life of a prophet. In point of fact, I have merely to look up the proper page of the proper book and find the answer. So many texts by authorities make one's mental grasp of the Yoga a simple matter. Although it is far easier to understand by the mind a passage from 'The Life Divine' by Sri Aurobindo than realize it in practice, we are only interested in the former. The all-important question is about the reason why learned writers behave as unscrupulous and mendacious canard-mongers, and that too in connection with the life of saints.

Before attempting any speculative solution of the riddle, we must look closely at the 'riddle of the World.' Its essence is Truth—unmixed and impeccable. But the apparent form into which the essence casts itself is a Manichean mix-up of truth and falsehood. On the dynamic side truth generates good and falsehood produces evil. The end-product of all appearances through a protracted mutation from inconscient and inert matter to superconscient and ultradynamic spirit via the half-way house of mind—that half-lit, half-dark level of consciousness of limited dynamism. Evidently, the Principle of Life that comes between matter and mind is even less conscious but more fidgety than mind. The ascending series of substance from the material base to the spiritual summit is, not doubt, immanent in every human being. But the most significant principle—the soul-substance is the organizer and the guide of an individual's transition from a more ignorant to a less ignorant state. By 'ignorance' in such contexts is meant half-knowledge, which is neither complete nescience nor full knowledge. In fact, mental knowledge is never anything but half-knowledge. Of the myriad sense-impressions incident on the cerebral cortex every moment, we are but aware of the very few that succeed in calling or even button-holing the

attention of reason. Secondly, our mind usually depends on the very limited and sometimes fallible power of the sense-organs. Hallucination, illusion, subjective bias and the like complicate matters and what I think to be true is rejected as false by another. Confusion and doubt only linger polemics because none has full knowledge even of the outermost venter of the world-reality. What our eye or ear conveys is but a secondary quality of the object of knowledge. In fact, even such secondary qualities such as colour and sound are differently perceived by different men. The same piece of a block of wood appears yellowish to one, brown to a second and tawny to a third. Even memory which links past percepts to the present is a 'dragon-fly' darting over the waters of the past and rendering one's recollection suspect or uncertain. Finally, I may have crammed a whole library of books without having gained any iota of knowledge of my soul or of the universal soul of Nature. God, the supreme soul is even more obscure. Scholarship enhances one's vocabulary and fills one's memory-store with sense-based data but has nothing to do with the suprasensory essence and objects whose external features are described by such data.

We have mapped out the extremely limited domain over which the human mind, depending as it does on the partial knowledge based on the sense-data, has some cognitive function. Yet its method of knowing of an object of knowledge is one of separation. When I know a tree, I do not become one with the tree. Nor do I have any direct contact therewith, the *sensa* linking the tree to my perceptive self while the object—the tree and the subject—I myself—stand apart one from the other. This is what our mind is capable of knowing. But this is not to detract from the well-known tendency of the mind to cross its natural limits. How to cross the Rubicon, in that event? The mind has the requisite know-how. As long as I keep the syntax flawless, I am capable of producing any amount of

boundary-crossing. I mean crossing the apodictic limits of the sense-organs. For instance I may, maintaining syntactic rigour, construct a sentence, 'Yesterday Lord Krishna addressed a meeting attended by Siberian birds and some leaves of basil, the topic being the construction of a hydrogen bomb.' Equally, I can construct a brief sentence, 'The moon has updated her book on topology.' In the same vein I may write, 'Lord Chaitanya gave me the dream-command to update Bimanbehari Mazumdar's book.' There will always be come credulous people who would believe in the third sentence, even while rejecting the other two as absurd. This word-power, which on wings of fancy can soar higher and higher, is the means to the intended end of crossing the limits of mind's actual power. Men are not less fanciful than children. The megalomaniac, the hysteric, the neurotic are extreme examples of a general characteristic of mankind. Even scientific theories and poetical works are often products of imagination. And imagination is but fancy restricted to a plausibility-domain.

Yet imagination is the first signet seal of the Beyond hidden here and now and within the grotto of every human heart. The origin of imagination is a power higher and greater than reason. Proceeding from a spiritual plane, Intuition gets mixed with reason and gets diminished, blurred and distorted too. The higher knowledge inherent in Intuition on its mutilation and deformity by the logical thinking may appear to the mental witness as Imagination. What is true to Intuition in its native plane is projected onto a rational plane of the sense-bound mind. Yet projection means a multi-dimensional reality being confined to an Euclidean bourne of three and only three dimensions. The sense-mind with its acme of faculty of cognitive co-ordination known as reason misapprehends the projected figure as a truth of its own. Actually, its misprision is due to its ignorance of the intuitive plane of spiritual

consciousness. What is true in that plane is not literally true on a lower plane of the mental reason. The value of the symbolic truth can be rightly assessed by one who has had conscious ascent to the intuitive plane. A swan projected on the mind-plane may indeed be the individual soul to spiritual intuition. When we glimpse a higher truth without having an ascent to its native (higher) plane, we do it by means of our imagination. Unlike the original intuition, its diminished and distorted variant known as imagination is largely tarnished by one's idiosyncrasy, predilection and prejudice.

At long last we are close enough to the fundamental question : What is the cognitive process that allows credulity as found not only among the laity but also in the elitist sections of the population? The point is the reader's credulity or better its psychology rather than the consciously woven yarn which a devotee dishes out in order to glorify his Guru (or himself). It is a fact that any miracle-tale is apt to produce a sort of somnific effect on one's reasoning faculty. One does not lose the power to 'think' even so. But, thought bereft of reason is no better than infantile disorder called fancy. Indeed it is far worse than somniloquy as far as its rationality or plausibility is concerned. When one talks in sleep, one is not necessarily bereft of all reasoning power. But the artificial sleep induced by miracle-tales forces the reader into the slough of numinous and an eerie funk. Fear is the most effective soil for the luxuriant growth of irrational expectancy. After all, a numinous abuts on an existential dread. The imbecile acceptance of the absurd is the pet game of fancy. When reason is in slumber, it is fancy's hour. The awe-stricken reader has a superstitious fear of ominous consequences in case, he would challenge the veracity of one's own Guru's (or even the writer's unknown Guru's) 'spiritual' powers.

The most debasing degeneration of Bhakti is fear. 'Europe had honoured the God-fearing man'. But 'India has loved the



God-lover.' A Religion based on fear of God is apt to be aggressive against alien faiths. But a Religion based on love of God is more tolerant. Every miracle-tale, true or false is prejudicial to a devotee's spiritual and moral well-being. First it generates a twofold vital movement of fear and attraction. We have likened the credulous miracle-tale reader to a fanciful child. Indeed we have not been rhetorical even for that matter. For like a child fearing ghosts is drawn nevertheless to ghost-stories. The reader of miracle-tales is likewise funky of miraculous feats but drawn to them nevertheless.

In a preceding paragraph we characterized Imagination as an Illimitable consciousness stranded into the house of reason. Reason has a Procrustean bed and intuition has to bear with necessary mutilation. But the miracle-monger as well as his reader are guided (or misguided) by Fancy, which, unlike Imagination is but Intuition throttled into the dungeon of unreason. What is the epistemology of Fancy? Is it like the weird sisters of Shakespeare's Macbeth a power to topsy-turvy truth and falsehood. Is 'Fair' 'Foul' to Fancy? No principle guides Fancy; it is more bizarre than any Shakespearean witch. Its mountain is a mole-hill, all its geese are swans. Devoid of cognitive and creative power, it serves an important function nevertheless by allowing the brain-cell transistors to go off-line. It is a second line of diversion, the dream being the first.

Yet there is no community-brain. Fancy runs riot in a community think-tank. Sequacious followers of the doyens suffer even worse. In fact, an individual entirely immune to fancying is a rarity. There is not great harm if fancy really gives some respite to the brain unduly taxed by reason and the urge to unattainable truths. But a community of devotees given to fancying godlike power in every third person in ochre is riding for a fall. The fanciful fans of Adwaita, Sita, Srinibas and Narottam have fallen not only from the grace of God but also



from the position of respectability that hagiologists are supposed to occupy. While we quoted the highest exponent of the yoga—Sri Aurobindo Himself—to convince ourselves that miracles are no myths always and that highest Yogis too make use of their miraculous powers whenever the divine fiat enjoins them to act so, we must be wary of those writers who concoct miracle-tales, all myths, to extoll their spiritual idols. We have traced the origin of this miracle-mongering to an ill assimilated voice of the higher intuition. Yet most men have such half-baulked ray of the higher plane to suggest, however vaguely, that there is a preternatural order which can and does exceed the law the dynamics of the physical nature.

Now, every miracle is a sort of projection of the higher consciousness on a plane of the lower. By the same token, the greatest of miracles observed on the terrestrial sphere is undoubtedly the transcendental phenomenon of Avatarhood or God's human birth. A phenomenon is a natural occurrence whose satisfactory explanation is still beyond any physicist (or some such scientist). So, it is a thing governed by some yet unknown law of matter and material energy. How can a phenomenon be transcendental i.e. beyond the spatio-temporal determinations? It is a phenomenon in the sense that it is rather recondite. The oxymoron of the epithet transcendental phenomenon is to point to its extra-terrestrial, mystic character. Lord Krishna, Lord Chaitanya, Lord Ramkrishna and Sri Aurobindo are considered Avatars each. An Avatar, as we have maintained, provides a necessary link between one occult plane of consciousness and another in order to accelerate nature's tardy process of evolution. Yet the human cloak worn by the Avatar is not an ad-hoc vesture of a sort. The frontal human personality has all the makings of the average man except, of course, his lust, greed and other failings of the flesh. So the Avatar invariably gets married but does not have any carnal

relation with his spouse. The Puranic evidence of Lord Krishna's fatherhood may be a legend, or it may even be true. There may be a profound reason for Lord Krishna's exceptional action in the matter. I must not hazard a guess as to the veracity of the report. Nor can I offer a tentative explanation of something I will never understand. We are only concerned herewith Lord Chaitanya, who was just like Lord Ramkrishna and Sri Aurobindo in matters relating to sex and marriage. All three had eliminated sex from their physical and vital consciousness. Don't suppose their divinity found such elimination a farcically simple job. To conquer a frailty of the lower nature is far more difficult a job when an Avatar (or even a Yogi) attempts it. This is because they are representative men who have to bear the burden of the lower nature of the race. A Yogi too has to bear the load of all those who have the same kind of the subconscious formation as the Yogi. There is no such subset for an Avatar, the whole human race being included in his circumconscient and the whole of humanity being his field of action. An Avatar has to fight against the human weaknesses in right earnest and in all seriousness. At birth a human weakling, and by Yogic effort a superhuman divine in the end—this is the double-sheeted life-story of every Avatar.

Unless we have a mental view of Avatarhood, our studies in Sri Chaitanya biography will be like one's perusal of the life of Napoleon by Abbot. A fact-finding mission with no other outcome it would be in that event. Since Dr. Mazumdar is absolutely silent on everything connected with spirituality of Avatarhood, I have been obliged to write a whole chapter lest his otherwise well-written book would leave the reader guessing and repining. While I have no competence to explain metaphysics or spirituality, I have the certitude that all I have said is authentic in as much as I have drawn upon the words and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. When one's

entire pastiche is borrowed from the Divine Authorities, one need not apologize either. So I have pirated ad lib upon the tenets of 'The Life Divine' and the published messages of the Mother.

## Appendix II

### A Case-study

The reader must have noticed my humble view of Sri Chaitanya. It is ridiculous for one of my ilk to guesstimate the spiritual status of a colossus of Sri Chaitanya's dimension. My view of him as an Avatar is based on Sri Aurobindo's opinion. If scores of Krishnadas Kaviraj grudge his divinity or Brindaban Gosamis conspire to abstain from salutation to him at the outset of their books, it would weigh with me less than a bird's feather against the Himalayan gravity of evidence just mentioned. In the opinion of Krishnadas and others of his ilk Sri Chaitanya was a good devotee of Lord Krishna. This author enjoys the trust of Dr. Mazumdar. Many, however, resent his queer formula of explaining the love-emotion of Sri Chaitanya in terms of Radha's unrequited love of Lord Krishna. Such theories as Krishnadas's are no more than left-handed compliments in the eye of a cynic. To a research scholar, however, the Lord's Nilachal lila as described by Krishnadas is the most dependable account available. The fact remains, however, that Lord Chaitanya appeals to the reader not for his outer activities. His main appeal is not to a researcher but to a devotee. Whether X or Y accompanied the Lord during a particular tour of his is inconsequential to a devotee. To him his spirituality is the sole point of interest. An Avatar's own concern is certainly not a literary critic, nor a research student but a genuine devotee. But such devotees seldom write the life-history of their idol. Those, who have written are, except for a few belonging to Bengal, have taken pains to confine their work to the externalities of a life whose secret lay within and hence beyond the empirical attempt to unravel it. So they have figured out an all too human account of Lord Chaitanya.

Krishnadas Kaviraj and the five Goswamis of Brindaban each had a thing about Lord Chaitanya. Despite the Bengal school of Vaishnabs (including close associate and biographer, Murari) being satisfied that Lord Chaitanya was identical with Lord Krishna, Krishnadas and the Goswamis found in him nothing more than a devotee of Lord Krishna. True, Krishnadas praised his Radha-like love of Lord Krishna. But one may not ever know whether it was to damn by faint praise that the learned biographer did contrive the Radha analogy. For Radha has been made out to be woman given to extra-marital love of Krishna. Chandidas and Vidyapati have been widely read by Vaishnabs. To them, then, thanks to Chandidas and Joydeb, Radha's is a carnal craving for Krishna, her philanderer! No amount of denunciation is enough when some verse-maker sling mud on the divine-incarnate. Radha's personal history is of no avail as long as true devotees adore her, as they would a deity, in view of her utter and absolute love of Krishna. Radha is the primitive term for selfless Bhakti and desireless devotion.

With Chandidas and Joydeb in mind, we find it easier to see why Krishnadas Kaviraj and the Goswamis of Brindaban were so stinted in their appraisal of Lord Chaitanya's greatness. They were hell-bent on discounting his divinity. O that green-eyed monster of Shakespeare's fancy! How funny it is to see that men are also capable of envying a God-Incarnate! Did Joydeb and Chandidas envy Lord Krishna in the same manner? No, they merely laid the Lord on their (own) procrustean bed. Chandidas's Rami was fobbed on Radha! He made a picture of the Lord after his own image for that matter.

It's a veritable spectrum of Bhakti that we observe as we consider the Vaishnaba biographical literature. On the one extreme is the stodgy scholasticism of Brindaban poets who are eloquently silent on the issue of Lord Chaitanya's divinity. On the other extreme is Nityanandadas (Baidya) who imputes power of



miracle on lesser Vaishnabs like Srinibas as well. Regarding the palpably contrived tales of miracle I need not re-iterate my view. But I must not baulk even at volubility, if necessary, for the sake of countermanding Krishnadas's awkward Radha-theory of Sri Chaitanya's Bhakti for Lord Krishna.

Well, Krishnadas is a putative scholar of the scriptures. But he could quote no chapter and verse to give a scriptural justification of a woman's unrequited love of her wight causing a human birth thousands of years after the death of that woman. Now, the woman, in question is Radha whose repining amativeness lay alive somewhere in some invisible plane till some thousands of years later that love manifested itself as Sri Chaitanya was born! It's no conceit, no parallogism but an unmitigated lie. Obviously, Krishnadas Kaviraj is trying to adonize the filthy Radha of Joydeb-Chandidas. Or else, the question of unrequited love won't arise. A true love of the divine is not supposed to swap itself with some personal fulfilment. The all too human vital craving is a barter. But is is not Radha's love. Krishnadas in a bid to conceal and cover up Lord Chaitanya's divinity desecrates the immaculate image of both Radha and Lord Chaitanya. What is even more disconcerting is the concoction of a theoritical model that is ridiculously puerile. No materialist science would support his unrequited love model. No occult discipline would give credence to a craving causing a rebirth. Well, rebirth is a matter of the soul. A sex-craving is not one's soul. So? I totally disagree, therefore, with Dr. Mazumdar who eulogizes Krishnadas's authenticity. When the person and his status, his mission and his ideal are distorted by an author, his work cannot command authority by the mere fact that its date-labels and its tour-accounts are correct!

So far none of the authors of the lives of Sri Chaitanya and his cortege has passed our authenticity test. What is worse, they

are not inadvertently mistaken. They have intentionally overstated or understated the qualities of the characters concerned. A relief, however, is provided by a modest writer of unknown antecedents. If Uddhabdas's verse describing the mother, Narayani, of this writer, Brindabandas, be correct, one must admit that Brindabandas was born on the wrong side of the blanket. So it speaks volumes for the maturity of Brindaban's numerous admirers that they did not fault him for an alleged escapade of her mother into cupid's arm, culminating, reportedly, in the birth of this illustrious biographer of Sri Chaitanya.

Brindabandas in his 'Chaitanya Bhagbat' adores Sri Chaitanya as an Avatar and cites Adwaita's authority in self-defence. He must have consulted the biography of the Lord as written by his friend, Murari (in Sanskrit). Krishnadas Kaviraj, who is meticulous about the exactitude of Sri Chaitanya's external life depiction is of similar opinion. Yet, it is Brindabandas who has conquered the heart of the Bengali-speaking readers by his sheer sincerity of devotion to the Lord.

While there can be not two opinions on his absolute faithfulness of reproduction of the externalities of Sri Chaitanya's life, I regret that I cannot say the same thing about his depiction of the ideal of spiritual living as upheld by the Lord himself. It's a vexed tale of tussle between the Ideal and the Real or the path-finder and the follower. Like every ideological conflict, the Vaishnab conflict too turned all too soon into factional feuds. The point at issue was the definition of love or, non-euphemistically speaking, the place of heterosexual bond in Sadhana. It is of interest to note that all great Yogis and Avatars—Sri Aurobindo, Lord Ramkrishna and Vivekananda, in particular—have enjoined the Sadhaka to eliminate sex completely. The disconcerting features of mixed love as opposed to unmixed love were brazenly manifest some

years after the Lord had shifted to Nilachal. One illustrious Vaishnab leader, Nityananda had indulged ad lib in loving association with women like Jahnabi and Basudha. The word passed round that he had a son by a widow, Narayani. All these were examples to follow. Tales of Lord Krishna á la Chandidas and of love á la Nityananda were additional spur to one's unregenerate vital. Lord Chaitanya himself married twice but remained celibate, his marriage being a Sanskara of an Avatar. (A Sanskar is a compulsive act rooted in tradition.) He was an uncompromising ascetic, who disowned a disciple as he talked to a woman and procured some rice for his Guru (Lord Chaitanya). If sex, including extramarital variants were admissible in Yoga, Yogis would not be a rarity. If one claims to be a Yogi and practises extramarital sex, one's yoga is a farce. Nityananda followers found many affluent libertines in their midst to give a factional character to their expanding group. Orthodox followers of Lord Chaitanya's lofty ideal of asceticism and the liberal group had no love lost between them forevermore.

Dilating on the Nityananda faction is not my idea here. I just wish to point to one notable discrepancy of Brindabandas, who had not the face (or the intention) to expose the fissiparous trend of the Nityananda-faction. He even lacked the strength to condemn the aberrant leader, Nityananda, whose carnal creed of Sakhibhaba (the girl friend association) made the greatest contribution to the decline of the social reputation of Vaishnabs.

While Brindabandas considered Lord Chaitanya a divine being, he failed to bring himself to denounce the wrecker of his cult and institution of sex-free love and desireless Bhakti. Nityananda, that wrecker was too formidable a stalwart in his eye. In view of his timid surrender before an attractive but misleading personality detracts from the moral power expected of a biographer one whose might overwhelmed the oppressive

and antidivine Nazi of Bengal. The authenticity of a biography depends on the objective representation of the friends, co-workers and friends turned foes and all that. Mere devotion to the person concerned is not enough. Thus we reject the claim of Brindabandas to authenticity.

Indeed we have so far found none of the biographers to be authentic. May be, Brindabandas's book would make the grade if he had the mettle to call a spade a spade. But he was too sequacious by temperament to fault a famed man such as Nityananda. What is worse, he extolled this man in season and out of season.

Murari's book, 'Sri Krishna Chaitanya', has been highly praised by Dr. Mazumdar. There are praiseworthy features of the book. Murari being an associate of Sri Chaitanya had the privilege of knowing at first hand his outer life. What Dr. Mazumdar understands by a biography is all right if it is of a patriot or a business magnet. A prophet's life is not really on the surface for men to see it. A hagiology is not avidly read by a historian of literature. It is in fact meant for the devotee who does not care for the names of the prophet's tour-associates or for the exact date of his arrival at a site of pilgrimage. The devotee is interested in the history of his idol's spiritual development as far as he himself narrates it to his biographer or to someone who acts as the mediator between the prophet and the biographer. Even as a task it is far more difficult. First, the writer must not exaggerate or undermine the spiritual knowledge and power of the saint concerned. He must not be miracle—monger. Neither must he be an atheist or an agnostic totally ignorant of the mystic order. Moreover, a hagiologist must be conversant with metaphysics and the Yoga. Otherwise, he would err in depicting the teachings of his idol. If we apply these criteria to judge the merit and the demerit of Murari's work, we would simply be frustrated. Murari's book betrays a



naive credulity and a hunt for miracles of a bizarre sort. Murari has written that he once witnessed how Lord Chaitanya took the form of a pig. Such a preposterous report goes ill with Yogis' experience. Neither does it seem plausible. The same Brahman does inhabit a human form and a piglike form. But that does not imply a human being can take on a pig form. Legends and myths speak of God assuming a pig form. In his haste to prove Sri Chaitanya's divinity, Murari excogitates the absurd. On the theoretical side too, Murari had the conceit that Bhaktas or devotees were to mind the soul, the spirit being the concern of a Jnanyogi. In fact, the soul is a spark of the divine spirit itself. To obturate Jnan from Bhakti is a too mechanical and a too rigid formula to apply to highly flexible and wonderfully plastic forms of the higher consciousness and its working — Literary merit is another matter. Murari's metaphysical basis is too narrow and his attitude to spiritual power is puerile. I find little in Murari's work to merit high praise for its authenticity. If one misrepresents Lord Chaitanya's spiritual life, there is hardly any point praising him as an authentic biographer for the mere fact that he reproduces the tour-account of the Lord very correctly.

Kabi Karnapur, another contemporary of Lord Chaitanya, was a poetical genius. One would never miss the analytical faculty of the poet even so—a faculty grossly lacked by most poets. Krishnadas Kaviraj paid him subvocal compliments by using his ideas and keeping the secret of the borrowing. Krishnadas would only mention Kabi Karnapur as the source of his pastiche when he would copy his diction word for word. Both forms of borrowing from Kabi Karnapur—acknowledged or secret—are copious. Even Dr. Mazumdar, who is all praise for Krishnadas overtly indicates them.

For all that Krishnadas in his 'Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita' contends that Kabi Karnapur's father, Shibananda, christened



him Paramananda inspite of Sri Chaitanya who had suggested the name, Puridas, in view of his mother allegedly conceiving the babe while she and her husband were at Puri. Dr. Mazumdar is not convinced by Krishnadas's plea, because no evidence has been evinced in support of this incredible spurning of Sri Chaitanya's proposal by one (Shibananda) who adored him as an Avatar. An ulterior motive is read into this mendacious statement by Krishnadas who, presumably, wished to give a lie to the belief that Shibananda regarded Sri Chaitanya as an Avatar.

It would, however, be unfair to point to any possible prejudice against Sri Chaitanya harboured exclusively by Krishnadas Kaviraj. If Krishnadas alone grudged the halo of Avatarhood wherewith Sri Chaitanya was being invested by his Bengal-devotees, one might dismiss it as his idiosyncrasy. But, then the quintet of Brindaban Goswamis being tarred with the same brush, one must try and find some rationale for their common irrationality. The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram explained why even the greatest Avatar of all times, Sri Aurobindo, was seldom recognized as one. In Her words, men adore the past Avatar and misunderstands and one coeval with them. The inquisitions held to examine reported Avatarhood of some of them illustrate the point.

A true Chaitanya-Bhakta would never expostulate with writers like the Goswamis of Brindaban who denied that he was an Avatar. Kabi Karnapur's strategy was to ignore the Brindaban fellows altogether. Radha of Vaishnab Padas is but a woman of the most mundane kind. (Radha of traditional Hindu religion is a divine delight born of absolute devotion to God.) But the laity including the bulk of the reading public would go no farther than the image of Radha given in Joydeb's scurrilous verse eagerly sprinting to a secret grove where her philanderer is biding his time to enjoy her physically. And that

Philanderer á la Joydeb is Krishna. Krishna who killed Sishupal and Kangsha and saved the country from the knavery of Kauravs is a paradigm of male power. The same Krishna proves his divinity as he produces the Gita on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. But, then, the Joydev-Chandidas brand—an unscupulous womanizer called Krishna—is more popular. To denigrate Sri Chaitanya's image to the level of a Chandidas-brand Radha is a monstrosity. There being one Radha in the popular view, Krishnadas's Radha could not be an ineffable delight of pure Bhakti. Chaitanyadeb himself was a man of firm will and tamed the Knavish Kazi by his will-power. It is bad taste to pull an Avatar to a level of Radha whom, thanks to Krishnajaatraa, people regard as an adulteress. Envy like a self-fuelling engine ran full circle by its own malice. I, for one, would think more kindly of fellows like Krishnadas if they maintained a respectful silence about things too sublime for their ilk. Krishnadas's book on Sri Chaitanya has a negative value, if any. Some readers may be misled by his antic theory of Sri Chaitanya as an offspring of Radha's unrequited love! I have already explained that Radha of tradition could have no unrequited love as her love of the divine was selfless. So Krishnadas must have been at pains to trace the advent of Avatar Sri Chaitanya to an unsatiated sex-craving of an immodest woman whom Chandidas and men of his kind mean by Radha.

Kabi Karnapur's books are, by no means a philosophical dissertation each. True, he goes into the issue of Sri Chaitanya's Avatarhood. But goes about his job as a Bhakta should. He avoids polemics. His is an intuitive grasp of Sri Chaitanya's divinity. If the Lord's life and teachings read from a book stirs your soul to an intuitive grasp of his divinity, you are fortunate. There is no other way to glimpse the divine effulgence. Argumentation would lead to the centre-stage of nowhere. Yet

there are episodes of lighter vein in Kabi Karnapur's works. There is an amusing episode of Sri Chaitanya spending the whole night at Shibananda's place after a case of a thief's visit to that house. A divine personage in the role of a sentry is a treat to read about. The incident is described by the illustrious son of Shivabanda himself in the book, 'Mahakabya'. Kabi Karnapur had the uncommon characteristic of putting reins on poetical imagination lest it should in its grand sweep overreach limits of reality. His 'Mahakabya', composed nine years after the withdrawal of the Lord, is a very safe reference on the Lord's social impact.

I need not consider the fragments of highly stylized but poorly credible life-episodes of the Lord as in the Padas. First, these never stand out as serious of full biographies. Second, their Lyrical values notwithstanding, they are examples of the caricature of bhakti so-called bhakta-poets often provide. They mix up two immiscible elements—carnal love and spiritual love. What Chandidas perpetrated immediately before the Chaitanya era in rest of Lord Krishna in his 'Srikrishnakirtan' had been emulated, though less indecently, by the epigones to follow and write on Lord Chaitanya. We, creatures of clay can only tarnish the image of our idols. Perhaps it's wiser not to write on God-Incarnates unless one has Mahendra Gupta's dedication or at least Boswell's.

Let me refer to Krishnadas Kaviraj's niggling habits, which would irk any modern reader. While general features of Sri Chaitanya's cult are never lucidly stated, petty details of Prataprudra's contact with Sri Chaitanya are given tediously wide coverage. Place-names, names of fellow-travellers and a host of suchlikes have nothing peculiar about them. Besides, these are scarcely verifiable. No other author of Sri Chaitanya's life has given such data. The way Krishnadas Kaviraj invokes the bizarre episode of someone (like Kasi Mitra) beholding the

Lord in a Vishnu poise with four arms suits a novice rather than a reputed writer of Krishnadas's kind. One impressed by the spirituality of a saint may wish to convince the laity of his excellence. If he says, the saint's presence gave me peace, he speaks the truth but fails to convince those he wishes to. So, perhaps, he concocts a Vishnu figure assumed by the Saint. Krishnadas should have known better than painting the lily. None needs magnify his greatness. He is great par excellence—he is Lord Chaitanya. Krishnadas Kaviraj lets loose his wildest fancy pretty often. I am of opinion that his concoction of miracles by the Lord is a sort of backwash of his oar in his journey to the Goswami-cult. He is bent, as we all know, on disproving the Bengal Vaishnabs' theory that Lord Chaitanya is an Avatar. The reader may suspect jealousy or prejudice on the part of the writer. To countermand such criticism he 'concedes' (!) a point to Sri Chaitanya. He allows the Lord the liberty to assume a four-armed figure in season and out of season. This, he conjectures, would console the reader and give a lie to the speculation about his prejudice against the Lord. I do not know how far my conjecture about his conjecture is correct. But I need one to reconcile Krishnadas the miracle-monger to Krishnadas the Avatarhood-basher.

At times, however, the miracle-monger predominates as when in chapter 17 of his book he speaks of tigers of a forest repeating the mantra, 'Krishna' at the behest of Sri Chaitanya who was wending his way to Brindaban through that tigerinfested forest! Taming a ferocious predator by yogic power is not pure romance. Swami Vivekananda's spiritual power had warded off a tiger even when he wished to be devoured by the hungry beast! Let us recall the supernatural dynamics. It is, as we explained earlier on, a new element of another dynamics that makes use of the familiar elements with well-known dynamics. A miracle is but a projection of a higher



law on the lower to allow the lower the benefit of accretion and enlargement without losing its native structure and operation. If a tiger meets a yogi, it may be silenced into a comatose state. But no yogic force will make it write out the weinberg-salam Lagrangian or chant a Hindu mantra!

So Krishnadas Kaviraj is unreliable at either remove—both his hyperbole about the Lord's exhibition of miracles and his denial of the Lord's Avatarhood compel me to disagree with Dr. Mazumdar who showers superlative Laudation on his 'Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita'.

We now consider the objectionable features of the other work, for which too, Dr. Mazumdar is full of admiration. This is the famous 'Sri Chaitanya Bhagbat' by Brindabandas. The merit of the book according to Dr. Majumdar is the faithful depiction of the Nabadwiplila of the Lord. In fact, a very detailed account of the outer life of Sri Chaitanya at Nabadwip is given by Brindabandas. Two factors which contributed to the writer's success are his contemporaneity with the Lord and his frequent use of the standard reference on Sri Chaitanya biography by his devotee and friend, Murari. But Murari was not as dependable a reference on the spiritual life of the Lord, since he was prone to miracle-mongering of the kind we find in an epigone of his.

As far as sadhaks and devotees are concerned, Brindabandas's reputation is not for his detailed report on what Sri Chaitanya said or did but for his assertion of what Sri Chaitanya was (namely, a divine person). Yet, Brindabandas too sometimes lapsed into fanciful excogitation. His account of Sri Chaitanya who 'felled and fisticuffed an elderly sadhak, Adwaita, or his report on Sri Chaitanya's insistence on arson to burn alive the inmates of the Kazi's house are a priori discarded as absurd by any that knows of the balance of temper of the Lord. The Protest-Procession led by Sri Chaitanya was meant



to violate the Kazi's prohibitory orders on Sankirtan or a procession of hymn singers. One may read about the incident in Sri Aurobindo's own words. But, then, to depict Sri Chaitanya as a pyromaniac or a pugilist is in bad taste even when these are done to set a parallel between Lord Krishna, the terrible slayer of the cross-grained, and Brindaban's own ideal.

Yet another work, 'Chaitanyamangal' by Lochan deserves mention. If it has no special merit as a faithful life-history, its flaw is not that the writer has a thing about Lord Chaitanya. Krishnadas Kaviraj and Lochan are both caught tripping. But their errors are from opposite directions. While Krishnadas does, in effect, damn by faint praise the ineffable divine being, Lochan overdoes his legitimate admiration for the divine in human form. It seems, Lochan deduces his results on the axiomatic basis of a typical metaphysician who believes that a God-Incarnate is a miniature form of God. As far as omnipotence and omniscience of God are to be expected in an Avatar, well, that latter will never let Lochan down. So Lochan's Chaitanyadev causes flowers' blooming, seeds' dehiscence and a leper's cure. I do not mean that these make up a tall order for an Avatar. I just mean that an Avatar, who is capable of far greater miracles, would ordinarily debar from exhibiting his supernatural Power. For his purpose is to lead a life that is itself an object lesson for God-seekers. And true God-seekers are not those who turn to spirituality for the glamour of supernatural powers. To lead a life very close to an average human life with all the inherent difficulties presented by the flesh to the spirit, and to emerge triumphant in the end against the ignorant hind-pulls of wrath, sex-lust, power-craze, greed, jealousy and all that being the mode of earthly living of every Avatar, it is preposterous to present him as a bloated show-man of his tawdry wealth of occult powers. Lochan's first foible was this ill-conceived idea to make a miracle man of

Lord Chaitanya. While this was merely an overdoing of his admiration for his idol, his second foible was even more irritating to Dr. Majumdar, who always demanded facts rather than fictions as the goal of a biography-maker. Unfortunately, Lochan's penchant for highlighting his Guru, Narahari, sometimes pushes him far from the realm of history and close to romantic fiction. Narahari is made out to be alpha and omega of all that Sri Chaitanya did at Nabadwip. For all his trumpeting, Narahari was not accorded the pride of place inside the galaxy of Panchatattwa publicized by the redoubtable Swarup-Damodar Lobby. The discomfiture of Lochan was due to Brindaban vaishnabs' reliance on more reputed biographies of the Lord, which paid scant compliments to Lochan's Guru.

Not does he distort facts to extol Narahari and to present Sri Chaitanya as a miracle-man but he also misrepresents the child Nimai. Neither Murari nor any other eye-witness confirms, for example the following strange tale : Once child Nimai was rebuked, according to Lochan's 'Chaitanyamangal', by his mother because the child had eaten of some bhoga meant for the deity. (By 'bhoga' is meant some delicacies offered to a deity. The Christian Practice of the Eucharist ritual has some resemblance to Hindus' 'bhoga'.) There's nothing much that is incredible up to this point. Even an Avatar behaves pretty childishly in his childhood. It is not impossible for a child to taste a bhoga delicacy. Nor should we question the plausibility of his being admonished by his mother for that alleged act of improvidence. What is impossible, however, is the alleged reply given by the child in defence of his act. Lochan reports that child Nimai astounded Sachidevi, saying, 'I ate of the deity's bhoga because I am divine myself.' It is known that Sri Chaitanya did not declare himself to be divine even when his devotees and admirers adored him as an Avatar. He was modest at Prime of Life when most show off a contrary trait of

orrogance. Is it believable that in childhood the modest youth had been arrogant enough to assert his divinity in an uncouth manner of desecrating a sacrosanct ritual of bhoga offered to a deity? Even when we concede a point to Lochan here, a still more obstinate question would arise at this point. Many would ask, 'can a child ever feel its divinity even if the child grows to realize his divinity later on? Well, it is not ageing or maturity but protracted practice of the yoga that allows an Avatar to realize his divinity. All that is impossible within the few years of childhood. Locan's report to the effect that Nimai was fond of Kirtan from his boyhood days is suspect. Had it been so, Murari must have mentioned it. What is more, Lochan, in his eagerness to maximize the similarity between Sri Chaitanya and Srikrishna, describes the former as the eighth issue of his parents. Murari asserts that he was the tenth issue. Lochan also speaks of Adwaita worshipping the matrix of Sachidevi in anticipation of an Avatar to be in gestation there. Apparently, God Almighty had consulted the fellow called Adwaita before choosing Sri Chaitanya's parents! Equally fantastic is Lochan's declaration that Sri Chaitanya had transformed a person by a single physical touch. Since these assertions are not testable by an empirical method, I must examine their rationale and the consequent plausibility. It is not very convincing to dismiss a report as false for the sheer reason of Murari's or Krishnadas's silence on it. Dr. Mazumdar, who avoids the metaphysical argument has to fall back on the testimony of men he trusts (such as Murari and Krishnadas). Avoiding that fallacy of non sequitur class involved in the testimony-centric conclusion, I only add that an Avatar himself realizes his Avatarhood first and that such a realization comes after an assiduous and protracted sadhana. May be, he does not disclose what he has so known about himself. It is preposterous to attribute a foreknowledge of an Avatar to be born of Jagannath Misra and

Sachi. In any case, a person of very modest spirituality such as Adwaita cannot foresee what is on the knees of the gods. As to the story of a physical touch by Sri Chaitanya transforming an unknown fellow, I only wish Lochan knew one or two things of spiritual transformation. Even Vivekananda could not be transformed by a single touch with which Lord Ramkrishna graced him in his youth. The touch gave Naren (Vivekananda) some supraphysical cognition of an omnipresent reality. Such passing phases may change one's philosophy. To change one's nature i.e., to transform oneself, a lot more is needed. A Guru's guidance, yogic exercise through decades, individual competence and, of course, the grace of the divine. A transformed man is not led by his sense-mind but by his soul. The trouble is that several lives of past sadhana alone give one the knowledge of the soul. Soul's guidance comes even later. The crucial factor of individual competence explains why we are awfully disqualified. If any of us qualifies for the splendid job of transformation, he must have been a sadhak in several previous incarnations of his.

So it is with every biography of the kind. Lord Ramkrishna led an uneventful outer life. Yet any number of legends can be heard about him. These hear-say ingredients serve to add thrill to a monotonously God-Lorn life of the Avatar. No wonder, few of Sri Aurobinda's own cortege have dared to attempt His biography. One Indian, Purani, and another Frenchman, Satprem, have looked at Him from entirely different angles—the former to what He did and the latter to what He became and meant. But, then, both were wary of the hazards their tasks involved. For they knew that His life, as Sri Aurobindo Himself clarified, was not on the surface for men to see it. This important truth is what I have been at pains to hold out. This is something Dr. Mazundar, a litterateur and a researcher interested in facts rather than in what they represent, would not



consider at all. The present discourse is meant to supply a missing link in Dr. Mazumdar's book.

In fact, the writing of Sri Chaitanya's life is beyond any of his associates. If Mahendra Gupta's example be cited, I would only remark that Sri Chaitanya's biographers lacked the dedication of this chronicler of Lord Ramkrishna. There is no unerring way other than recording the words of the Master himself. One must be contented with what these words tell one about the Master and his teachings. Sitting at the same table with Sri Aurobindo, for instance, Purani could never come closer to Him than man ever come toward God or physical mind near the divine supermind.

If our view-point be considered obfuscating or even difficult to grasp, the point at issue being some God-Incarnate, this is only natural. Even an artist or a poet has an inner life of no mean significance. In case of true god-men, the inner life is the more significant one. In this perspective, then, none of the Sri Chaitanya biographies could make the grade. So we are to condescend to an admission of their biographical status. Otherwise, even the outer events of Sri Chaitanya's life would remain unknown.

The question, however, is : 'Do we get any systematic and reliable account even of Lord Chaitanya's outer life?' We have found none of the biographers entirely satisfactory. Even Kabi Karnapur, who alone remains rational, discerning and keen even when he adores the Lord as a divine being, has the notable lapse of non-coverage of his Nilachallila. Were the Bengal disciples shocked at their idol's country-wide recognition? Did they wish monopolize Sri Chaitanya-worship? If Oriyas worshipped him as a Buddha re-born or if Brindaban Goswamis referred to his love of Krishna in a respectful manner, did not usurp something that was a vested interest of Bengalees. I am to ask—'Were even Murari and Kabi Karnapur drawn to the



Lord by a vital string? Was there nothing spiritual in their love?' I regret that I believe that their love was vital. Otherwise the fissiparous tendencies of the Nitai group would be nipped in the bud. Had they been spiritually open to their idol, no Krishnadas would dare to fabricate a preposterous Radha theory of the Lord's advent. Nor would Brindaban Goswami's refuse to offer even a courtesy-salutation to Sri Chaitanya at the outset of their books. Their flurry of protests against Gour-mantra would never be there if its, advocates were spiritually open to Sri Gouranga Mahaprabu. (By 'spiritual' I do not necessarily mean the divine cosmic consciousness. Just the conscious of the psychic being as Sri Aurobindo calls it is enough for the purpose. The psychic being means the soul-personality in Sri Aurobinda system.)

Now that I have been obliged to conclude that none of Sri Chaitanya's Bengal devotees really had any spiritual insight to see for themselves the controversial truth about Sri Chaitanya's divinity, all their invectives against the Brindaban Goswami's refusal to admit to the fond idea of their Bengal counterparts must be seen for what they were—a clash between the collective ego of one group with that of the other. But a true devotee—like the rustic confectioner recognizing Lord Ramkrishna as a divine being—could have intuited the truth about Sri Chaitanya. For a true devotee has his soul-consciousness liberated enough to receive a pleasant psychic shock-wave at the sight of a god-man. But Murari or any other biographer of Sri Chaitanya betrayed nothing of the kind. I find no profound difference between unstinted praise showered on Lord Chaitanya by Brindabandas and the left-handed compliments reserved for him by Krishnadas Kaviraj. Both were very ordinary men. May be, Brindaban liked to portray Lord Chaitanya as a new form of Lord Krishna i.e., as an Avatar. This was a truth chanced upon by Brindaban's ego not

a truth spontaneously and inexorably apparent to his soul. Krishnadas's ego grudged any such equation linking the two Avatars. So he argued out his fancied Radha image of Lord Chaitanya. I need not re-iterate my argument to make a mincemeat of this original nonsense due to a reputed writer. My point here is to treat all such unspiritual intellectuals on the same footing.

The crucially important issue lay beyond both a Chaitanya-fan and a Chaitanya-basher, if I am forgiven despite my use of terms more suited to mundane contexts. Neither Murari nor Brindaban knew even a jot or tittle of spiritual parctice. To affirm one's divinity in ignorance is no better than deny it in ignorance. Whatever these writes have written about the Lord's spiritual life is sheer romance. Krishnadas, for one, denies that Sri Chaitanya is an Avatar but pretends to be angry with those who overtly deny that he is one. These are sure signs of a mental approach. But Brindaban or Murari was no different in this respect.

All these compel me to regard Krishnadas's highly prejudiced account of Sri Chaitanya as one of those things. One may resent but cannot reject what is a fait accompli. Since his mission is one of fact-finding, we may, if we so choose, ignore his Radha theory in its entirety.

So we must look more closely at the 'facts' which he has collected. I begin with the ones none else has ever recorded. The first of these refers to a Turkish dignitary lamenting his being born a non-Hindu. This gentleman had been Lord Chaitanya's fellow-traveller in his journey from Orissa to Panihati. While the companionship during the journey is mentioned by Kabi Karnapur, for instance, none has ever written anything like the Muslim gentleman's reaction as described by Krishnadas. It is quite possible for any sensitive soul to be enamoured of Sri Chaitanya. The point is the hiatus between what might, and what did, happen!

A second 'scoop-news' of a sort provided by Krishnadas is about Sri Chaitanya's devotees, who, in their craze for the dust of their idol's feet, had created a big hole between the two end-points of his walk—the Ganga-bank and the abode of Sribas. It passes one's understanding what on earth and sub-soil particles of dust lying at the bottom of the hole had to do with their passion for the dust of Sri Chaitanya's feet. Certainly, the Lord did not tread a subterranean path to Sribas's home! Such hyperboles are no doubt pretty innocuous. After all, an overdone devotion is being overstated in rhetorical terms. Yet such inaccuracies of the diction detract from a writer's claim to authenticity.

A factual question has been raised by Dr. Mazumdar on Krishnadas's report that Gadadhar Goswami was a fellow-traveller of Sri Chaitanya in his passage to Shantipur.

The most fantastic, if also the most original, report of a tiger chanting the Krishna-mantra, has been referred to hitherto.

The difficulty of Krishnadas's work is that he does not cite any authority. The incidents occurring exclusively in his book were reported elsewhere too. Otherwise Krishnadas would never have known of them. Even if he heard them from someone, he ought to have divulged the name of his informant. This is a serious matter. No author betraying such lapses will be particularly remembered for his authenticity. As we have seen above that Krishnadas distorted the spirit and the purpose of the Avatar Sri Chaitanya, we conclude, in view of the same subjective fancy that goads him to tell tales out of school where the tales themselves are unconfirmed, that Krishnadas's biography has failed to make the grade as per criteria of authenticity.

We must now consider another genre of biographies. They are meant to describe the lives of the distinguished ones from among the Sri Chaitanya cortege. Some of these do bear on the

life of the Master himself, the interplay between the admiring cortege and the admired Master being a reciprocal relation. Besides, a tree is known by its fruit and a Guru by his disciple. So it is that the life of Lord Ramkrishna subsumes the life of Vivekananda. One must accept, as Dr. Mazumdar does, these orbiting luminaries as members of the spiritual sun—Lord Chaitanya. While affirming, therefore, the *raison d'être* of these biographies of Sri Chaitanya's devotees and associates of repute, we notice here a difference with those discussed above. I do not, naturally, point to the plain fact that these are not directly concerned with the life-history of the Master. They differ from Kabi Karnapur's work, for instance, not only thematically as they very well may with impunity. They differ also in the degree of subjective fancy indulged. I admit that no writer can avoid subjectivism. Yet wild fancy, personal preference and idiosyncrasy can, when unbridled, unmake what one could make by an exercise of reason and an agglomeration of the data.

The present (second) volume of the book by Biman Behari Mazumdar in translation is chiefly devoted to a review of such biographies of Adwaita, of Sita and of others as seem to preen on these lapses of thinking mind. True, reason seldom dictates terms, the *de facto* dictator being one's ego. One usually employs reason not to judge one's egoistic preferences but to justify them. And reasoning of a sophist which misleads the listener has all the makings of a pure reason. The sheer existence of debating forums amply proves the point that one may go on reasoning in defence of anything whether true or false. And a lot of sophistry or misleading arguments will be discovered in these works on Adwaita et al. The title of the long chapter, namely, 'some quasi-authentic etc.' is like a label, 'Beware of the lies while perusing these books'.

In fact, none of the biographies of Sri Chaitanya can even partially fulfil the criteria for authenticity as we have seen. The



common deficiency of knowledge of spiritual philosophy is the greatest shortcoming of the reputed authors from Murari to Krishnadas. A knowledge of Hindu rituals or a conversance with Puranic tales mean nothing much when it comes to the problems of the inner life of a spiritual luminary. Things become even more inscrutable for Shastra-citers like Krishnadas, when that luminary is no less a person than Sri Chaitanya, a veritable Avatar on all counts. I do not put a premium, as Krishnadas does, on the exactitude of the clock and calendar data of a great man's life. Nor do I value the exact names of his tour-companions. These may be important for a school-boy's quiz. The value of a biography of Lord Chaitanya is to be measured by the explication of the purpose of Avatarhood and an exegesis of his philosophy of life. These are issues which necessarily about on the province of metaphysics. Then the inner growth of the human front of the divine personage is something that is incomprehensible, even in principle, to one who is not a master of the process of the Yoga for the divine. By the Yoga I do not mean the physio-vital discipline to still the mind. The Yoga of Sri Chaitanya was a one-point programme to become the divine. The true depiction, then, of an inner growth of a Bhakta is best left to yogis. A knowledge of Sanskrit is no substitute for a yogic consciousness. In fact, a scholar living in the ordinary mental consciousness is apt to beat about the bush while a yogi can get to the heart of the matter. If we remember these points, we would see how superficial Murari, Kabi Karnapur, Brindabandas and Krishnadas and other biographers of Sri Chaitanya had been.

But the books dealt with in the present volume are doubly erring. The factual errors are possible even in an autobiography. These are not to be decried, unless they betray the writer's laziness or callousness. But one will not indulgence in any



intentional misrepresentation. And the books, in question are at fault at either remove, they are replete with factual inaccuracies and also tainted by an intentional overstatement of the spiritual status of their respective Gurus. The gross misunderstanding of occultism and its place in spiritual life is the chief reason of the sad state of affairs. In the following chapter we would meet with any number of examples of these foibles. We need not expatiate thereon at this stage. It would be rather useful to summarize some basics of spiritual philosophy and occultism instead. I am of opinion that ignorance of these fundamentals of spirituality left these writers with a locus standi to dabble in lives of spiritual persons. It is hoped, the following brief note on the spiritual philosophy will supply the clue to the correction of many of the errors of the books under consideration. It is with this end in view that I consider certain philosophical problems in the next chapter. Naturally, the blame for my viewpoint in the following dissertation must not be put on the author, Dr. Mazumdar. After all, he is, as the reader must have noticed averse to any theoretical question concerning spiritual stalwarts' life and ideology.

## Appendix III

### A digression on Avatarhood in Spiritual Philosophy

The first volume has shown that the house of Vaishnabs was divided on the alleged Avatarhood of Lord Chaitanya. We examine the point at issue, namely, Avatarhood from a Philosophical point of view. But you may wonder what on a suprasensory matter philosophy has to do. Still I would stick to my guns. For if you so wonder, well I have more wonder in store for you. Somehow I had known of the spin of the electron at a time when I knew no quantum mechanics. Some day a post-editorial article in a daily came to my sight. It carried a catchy title, 'The Philosophy of Spinning.' My eyes flurried over its lines, expecting to know of the Philosophy i.e. the dynamical generalities of the electron spin. Much to my frustration I realized that the writer meant by spinning the turning of a Chakra wheel á la Gandhi and as a means to the noble end of India's freedom. If there be a philosophy of spinning a hank of cotton into a wisp, it is at least not-impossible an idea to speak of the Philosophy of spirituality and Avatarhood.

It goes without saying that the modern trends in analytical Philosophy discount the value of metaphysics. The metaphysics-bashers mean to say that philosophy is not concerned with an unobserved domain where assertions are made without a correspondence with the sense-data predicates. One may accept this empiricist view if one likes. My point is that spirituality and metaphysics have very different *modus operandi*. While speculation about the ultimate reality is the genesis of metaphysics, spirituality has its alpha and omega based on experience. It is a prejudice of logical positivists that no experience is possible except by means of the sense organs. Their

refusal to consider the occurrences known as ESP or Extra-Sensory Perception, clairvoyance, second sight et cetera exposes their hollowness. While we, lesser mortals have our yogic consciousness sealed up, the fortunate few, who have it pretty open (or even fully open) are to be reckoned with. They do not lack any of logico-empirical powers of a Carnap or a Hempel. It is the latter—men of Carnap's ilk—who lack the extra-sensory power of knowledge and action. There is, however, the accusation that spiritual knowledge is not apodictic. The objection is overruled by any that lives in the yogic consciousness. It's inane to expect things given to the higher consciousness to be within the range of the ear, nose and eye.

What is no less of a jolt to a positivist is the fact that metaphysicians' conjecture very often come close to the truth that is revealed to the yogi who has a direct contact (or even an identity) with his object of knowledge. If a thinker knows how to immobilize the clamouring mind of reason, a higher knowledge may sometimes descend on his still mind. Those familiar with the writings of Spinoza, Kant and Schopenhauer will have noticed their frequent agreement with the sayings of prophets and yogis. I do not mean Kant's critique and the Upanishads tell the same truth. What I mean is that error of transmission and transfiguration apart, the original inspiration was at least kindred to spiritualists' assertions.

It will be more appealing to the rational mind if I begin with metaphysics rather than what is asserted by yogis. At the same time I must trust to the most impeccable metaphysics known. It is the Vedanta system of Indian metaphysics.

Accordingly, we begin with the postulate of an omnipresent reality. (Incidentally, the notion of God or the Absolute as the omnipresent reality is adapted here from 'The Life Divine' by Sri Aurobindo. Immediately the question arises—'Are the stone, the tree, the asp and all we

observe divine?' The yogis have seen the hidden visage of God in everything indeed. I hasten to add at this point that the Vedanta is but a rendering in (rational) mental terms of what the Upanishadic sages have experienced in their spiritual consciousness. The spiritual experience of the pristine sages of the Upanishads was not anything different from, but only a substantial part of, Sri Aurobindo's supramental experience. The logico-linguistic expression of a yogi's spiritual knowledge is the most dependable kind of metaphysics. Obviously, it is based on experience, Kantian metaphysics, for instance, is full of inconsistencies because Kant had no yogic experience, his system being merely conjectural and speculative. For reasons given above, the Vedanta being a linguistic form of Upanishadic vision, is subsumed under 'The Life Divine.' I do not mean that the Upanishadic sage had realized the highest consciousness that Sri Aurobindo possessed. Hence some of the assertions of the Vedanta based on the Upanishadic wisdom were cryptic or even erring. Yet one need not worry even when one is not well-up in Sanskrit for reading the Vedanta, in original. The supramental consciousness subsumes, and exceeds, the spiritual consciousness embodied by the Vedic and the Upanishadic sage. If one studies 'The Life Divine', one will find the entire Vedantic message subsumed under this great work, and learn a lot more than one would even from the Vedas. Whenever I shall speak of the message of the Vedanta, I shall mean the corresponding message as given in 'The Life Divine'. It is propitious to depend on the supramental gnosis rather than even the spiritual knowledge. For the present, it is enough to remember that the One Many riddle (i.e., the stymie of One God becoming many species and objects while the manifested manifold remains identical with

the One) can only be solved by the supermind. Spiritual consciousness even at its highest cannot so much as reconcile the one to the Many and vice versa. This is one of the reasons why I shall describe even Upanishadic truths in the manner of Sri Aurobindo. His supramental consciousness both subsumes and exceeds the spiritual consciousness of the Vedic and Upanishadic seers. Accordingly, His metaphysical work, 'The Life Divine' both contains and emends, (that is to say, 'Subsumes and extends') the metaphysics of the Vedanta. With this for our source-material, which is 'The Life Divine', we now go back to our spiritual Philosophy or metaphysics. (When a Yogi writes what he sees, it is supraempirical science. But we, who explicate his writing or even summarize it, are doing an exercise in metaphysics. To me, then the supraempirical science of 'The Life Divine' is nothing but metaphysics. To an advanced Yogi it is a verifiable scientific truth provided you agree to call supramental evidence an evidence! Unfortunately, the sciolist living in the mind forgets that the Supreme Court judgement is peremptory and tries a re-trial by the muniff court. I mean, the petty mind has no locus standi to meddle in the supramental way of knowing.)

The 'privilege' of the mind, if any, is to disbelieve what it fails to comprehend! Ayer lacks the comprehensive intellect necessary for comprehending the metaphysical axioms. So he calls them meaningless. So does every philosopher with a positivist leaning. None of them cares to remember that these are axioms only to a metaphysician. To a yogi these are all things of infallible experience. Let us see what are these. How yogis see them and some metaphysicians comprehend them will be discussed later on.

We had begun with an omnipresent reality as experienced by yogis including Sri Chaitanya and other Avatars. In their spiritual vision that reality is one and undifferentiated. If that



be so, how is it that we, ordinary men never see the one but experience a bewildering multitude of living and non-living things. To arrive at the apparent multiplicity of our cognition from that exalted oneness is explained as follows :

The all-knowing, all-powerful Absolute veiled Himself by successive screens of gradually opacity to seem to get lost in spiritual mind, mind, life and Matter at successive stages of involution of His plenary consciousness-force. This involution or the act of being covered up is referred to as creation in the common parlance. But human mind is not satisfied till it knows of God's motive, manifesto and purpose that made him assume successively more ignorant veils. Most of us would not do God the small favour of believing in His omnipotence. So He cannot be compelled to embark on a creation of spiritual mind, mind, life and Matter. Sri Aurobindo says that it is His *lila*. A child's playfulness exudes, and at once springs from Ananda (Delight). God in this case is like an eternal child at play. The nature of the game will be somewhat clearer when we consider later the reverse operation of evolution, which is a return journey toward the Infinite and Indivisible One. Even the moot point of our interest—the phenomenon of Avatarhood—will appear less recondite after we get the hang of the involution and the evolution of consciousness.

It may sound queer but I can't help pointing out the two thousand and four hundred years of western philosophy have failed to define the commonest of terms mind, soul and self. Later philosophers—Locke, Hume, Kant et al—have confused one with the other as if the mind and the soul, the soul and the self are but elegant variations of diction. Indeed many of us share the confusion of a Kant or the iconoclasm of a logical positivist like Ryle, who thinks that these terms are linguistic entities. Ryle, Neurath, and even Carnap would not believe in the reality of anything like mind. It is, to them, like an atheist

uttering 'God forbid' as a convenient idiom for 'I wish it never happened' so that God as described in say, 'The Life Divine' is not at the back of the mind of the atheist. Unless we clear away both kinds of confusion and realize that mind, soul and self are different and that they are real entities each, we will be ill at ease when the metaphysical propositions about these will be presented. Why must we think of the mind as a real thing ? We know, the behaviourist school of psychology, the logical positivist and the materialist engaged in science would say, 'Mind is what the mind is imagined to perform. In reality, thought, feeling, desire, will et cetera are the only realities of the psychological level. We use a generic term for all of these ; that term is mind. So it is an unobservable linguistic fiction, a word-fact of a sort.' The mind-basher need not be contradicted. He has contradicted himself by admitting to the reality of thought and will, for instance. Well, these are imponderable and unobservable. If they can be real, there is no reason why mind should not be so also. At this point Ryle would say, 'We use the word, school. But none has ever gone to school, because 'school' is merely a word-fact, a word to denote collectively real things like class-rooms, laboratories, libraries, office-rooms et cetera. Ryle refuses to see that a school is an arrangement to use the above real things in another real way, namely in a manner so as to educate and discipline those who go to class-rooms etc. A school is real as an institution though it does not span even one iota of Euclidean space as its library, for instance does. Ryle, however, is obstinate and says that the British Constitution is a figment but a team-spirit is an institution. All he says illustrates the old Greek Pejorative, *ipse dixit* ! The science worker can be silenced by asking, 'Do you observe electricity? Is electricity a mere word for illumination, motion or electrocution ? Is it not the efficient cause behind your filament lamp's luminosity and your motor's torque ?' So

is mind or the mental consciousness the real efficient cause of thought, feeling, desire and will.

Having confuted the mind-basher, we may feel elated and hope to discomfit the soul-basher or the spirit-basher either by a hand-waving argument or by an address to the mind-analogy. But things are not as simple as that. We could reason out our case against the mind-basher. As it comes to spirit or even our soul, we have no sense-data and hence no reason this way or that. We may at most say, 'Those who live in the sense-bound consciousness know nothing of the spirit. They have no locus standi to interfere here or declare that the spirit does not exist.' So we have won ? No, it's at best a pyrrhic 'victory to achieve which we have defeated ourselves as well'! For our adversary will turn the table on us to flummox us, 'The quo-que—You too know nothing beyond your senses' ken. How do you affirm the spirit ?' As far as theoretical logic goes, he is right. But logic does not go far—not farther, in any case than the domain of the sense-data. That is why Sri Aurobindo deplors the employment of reason either to confirm or infirm the reality of God-Will God, soul, spirit and all the suprasensory objects of knowledge remain unknowable ? Certainly not. The discipline of metaphysics has been possible on the testimony of yogis. One, who rejects the special cognitive power of a yogi (for the reason of his spiritual consciousness as we believe), has every right to differ with us. But we find it hard to imagine that all sages, seers and prophets have been telling us lies about their direct knowledge of those suprasensory objects concerned.

If one asks, 'Why one man ignorant of God believes in Him while another equally ignorant disbelieves God ?', well I would have recourse to God's Lila. Even at the risk of being squarely accused of tergiversation, I would repeat, 'It is His Lila to make one a believer and another an unbeliever.'

But a believer would be quizzical about the very doctrine of Lila. To comfort him we must plunge plump into the occult

history of the world—its creation and its evolution. That is, we must complete our story of God's Lila even when to a non-believer I would appear to be another raconteur, and nothing else!

To pick up the thread, we recall that God became spiritual mind first, which on further veiling successively became mind, life and Matter. So, even Matter is God though deeply veiled ! The marvels of the tiny electron, qua-electronics and its gift of the television, in particular, must weaken the confuter of our premiss that Matter is Brahman as asserted in the ancient Taittiriya Upanishad. But we would leave the confuter to his own good sense, since we are not canvassing votes for God!

Let us make it clear that spirit, mind, life and Matter of the preceding paragraph belong to a subtle, suprasensory and occult plane each. Each has a different plane. Note that the spiritual mind plane has a structure comprising sub-planes like overmind and Higher mind. We are not going into those details. We only need to remember that a veiled God even as an Overmind has some trace of divisionism i.e. ignorance and hence some lack of omnipotence. As God further veils Himself to appear as mind, His original power to identify Himself with all that is no longer there. The mind is far more divisive, separatist and inept than any level of the spiritual mind. Knowledge and power are the static and the dynamic facets of the chit (consciousness). Life has an even lesser power of knowledge. Matter is a somnolent dancer—apparently inconscient but infallible in its function. God at the summit and Matter at the base of the existential echelon are the only two that are perfect in their acts. No electron of an atom has integral spin or fractional charge. Errors and inefficiencies begin with the mind which fails to see its limitation because its knowledge is partial and imperfect despite its enjoying some more freedom of will than life. Matter, incidentally is devoid of freedom. But it performs

its task so infallibly! Does it fear quantum mechanics ? Or, does it follow the silent will of God as far as veiled God called Nature can transmit that silent will ? We defer considering these questions till we do with the theory of evolution.

Now evolution is the unveiling of the veiled consciousness which at the Primary source is called God, the Absolute, Brahman, the supreme etc. Evolution follows involution that has already yielded in the occult planes the overmind, the Higher mind, ordinary mind, life and Matter. The subtle Matter of the occult plane is weightless or imponderable. The last step toward the creation of the terra firma is the materialization of Matter as a physicist means by the term. So one more involutionary operation is necessary before gross, massive, extended and inertia-possessing matter may result. This being done, Matter is now forced by the occult life-plane's pressure on life concealed in its bed to release life or the vital being. Note that our gross Matter is terrestrial. In fact, the terrestrial reality begins with the appearance of gross Matter. Since life is more conscious and has more freedom, the release of the life-principle, which got embedded into subtle matter during the involution-process, is the first example of evolution.

An amusement is provided at this point by the diehard of materialism. He argues, following Friedrich Engels, that 'Matter is the ultimate reality. It is not vital conscious that concealed itself in Matter to emerge as the life principle—so argues the materialist. To his mind, Matter has created life. In fact, he suggests even the procedure of this uncanny creation. As some 'sufficient' complexity develops in the structure of Matter, life is generated out of that complex Matter.'

The materialist theory of abiogenesis is too crude to demand a serious consideration. But we are hemmed in by materialists of science of big business, of positivism etc. We must douse in waters of truth their false flame of wrath against consciousness



as an independent primitive. Let us first consider the merit of their case as it produces the 'evidence' of abiogenesis in the growth of insects from 'Lifeless Waste-matter. Actually, millions of virus and bacteria or other microbes lurk every waste-matter or any other filth. The microbes are invisible ; the larvae of insects are not noticed either till they grow to full-size insects. We see, the non-living matter did not produce living insects. Hidden insects were disclosed from the veil of lifeless matter much as evolutionary thrust of the occult life-plane (the vital plane) released or disclosed the life veiled in a terrestrial gross Matter. Yet it would be kindred to ignorance to suppose that by making a mincemeat of an ill-conceived argument or example, one has brought home the bacon.

To logicians such examples are bad examples. Moreover, argument by analogy is no argument, because correspondence is not equality. To one acquainted with Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus' it is nonsensical to say that two things are equal. If, then, we mean to confute the materialistic thesis that Matter as perceived sensuously is the fundamental or ultimate reality, we must proceed logically. I do not suggest that logic can show us how truth is like. My idea is to employ logic to prove how mistaken materialists are. Indeed logic is of use in detecting error of inference but incompetent to reveal the truth or falsehood of the premises.

Now what are the fundamental axioms of thought or thinking. Every school boy knows of the axiom of a part being less than a whole. (A subset equal to a given set is not, after all, a proper subset.) Another axiom popularized by authors of Aristotelian logic is the axiom, 'ex nihilo nihil fit' i.e., out of nothing there may come nothing. In a sense, it can be subsumed under the part-whole axiom just stated. How can life come from a lifeless Matter ? Complexity of Matter may be arbitrarily increased by polymerization of the molecule or by

some other chemical reaction. There is a particularly useful way of adding— $\text{CH}_2$ 's ad lib to an organic molecule. Do you think  $\text{C}_3\text{H}_8$  is nearer life than  $\text{CH}_4$  because of a greater complexity of its molecular composition? The law of quantitative change over to qualitative change is considered an open sesame by proponents of dialectical materialism. A change of production-relation may be explained by such a law. One may call it a qualitative change if one so likes. But the point is that a change is a quantitative concept. Some small authority of the working people may one day change into a decisive authority or even dictatorship. But the authority was there already. The labouring class is not absolutely powerless even before it assumes dictatorship. By the same token, to say that a more complex state of Matter creates life because quantity changes into quality is to admit that a less prominent form of life was there in Matter always. With increasing complexity of Matter, the latent life principle has quantitatively gained in prominence to such an extent that life has become explicit or recognizable. This is how Marxian materialism might explain the growth of life in Matter. But this is precisely our Yogic point of view where insouciant and dormant life—principle is inherently immanent in Matter. Life being more conscious than Matter, it is not possible to explain the emergent (life) as something created by the less conscious continent of Matter. In the same manner, life can, at a certain stage of evolution release Mind involved it provided the occult Mind—plane exerts pressure on the gross life plane of the terrestrial atmosphere. (The gross life-plane of the earth is a level of consciousness with several sub-levels to which embodied lives of plants, animals and men belong.)

It is known to Yogis that the release of life out of the veil of Matter and also that of mind out of the veil of life proceed by the instrumentality of Nature. But the next step in evolution

i.e., the emergence of the spiritual consciousness out of the ignorance of Mind is a process that cannot be easily or quickly achieved till man, the mental being chooses to do the yoga. This is because every human being (and even some higher animals like dogs) possesses a soul or the Divine Presence hidden in the grotto of the heart where the purpose of the soul is to lead the individual from Mind to the realms of the spirit. (I do not wish to go into the Supremind. Sri Chaitanya had not known of it either.) Before I go to explain the cosmic phenomenon of Avatarhood in terms of the simpler picture of the individual soul, I remind the reader that release or emergence is no creation and that the instrument is not the efficient cause. Materialists mistake the cable for the electrical energy and the brain for the consciousness. The invisible electricity turns the blades of the table-fan. The magnet, the ball-bearings, the axle et cetra form nothing more than the accoutrement, which by itself cannot turn a blade. Indian seers of ancient times knew that the brain is *tamasik* or inert although it has, in the subtle space the yogic centre called *Sahasrara*. (This centre is, physically, a little above the head; but we need not go into the technicalities of the yoga here.)

We now go to consider the soul and the phenomenon of Avatarhood. As the grades of consciousness above and beyond the mind can only evolve when the mental being, man, seeks to realize them by a conscious effort. But the mind itself being ignorant of the spiritual mind grades cannot guide the evolution to this stage beyond itself. (We must know why 'The Life Divine' refers to man as a mental being. Mind being his best part, the more conscious part than the vital or the physical being, man is indeed a mental being. Yet we, commoners have a mental reason that fails to prevail against most of the (unreasonable) vital impulses.)

The soul lies almost wholly concealed in us. On rare occasions when we hear some fine devotional song or witness

an act of human kindness and greatness or observe some exquisite beauty of nature, can we be conscious or, perhaps half-conscious of a deeper, more profound and more sustained principle called the soul. Most of us have this experience at least once in life, the rest having it in a more unconscious trance like situation so as to leave no permanent impression. (The soul is a divine spark around which are sheaths of the inner subtle mind, vital being and physical being as the quintessence of numberless rebirths preceding the present terrestrial sojourn of the soul-personality comprising the soul and the above subtle subliminal beings (sheaths, so to say). The soul-personality is the psychic being.) To bring the psychic being to the fore is the first step to a yoga for the divine. (A yoga for the egoistic power etc. is a vital craving which is answered by occult vital beings whom the misguided Sadhak fancies as divine. Incidentally, most putative god-men or spirituals are so misguided.) When the psychic being comes to the fore to take the lead of the physico-vital-mental parts, such dangers of being misled by a power-demon or the cupid are eliminated. If tales about Nityananda are true, one infers that his was an emotional vital Sadhana, which lacked the psychic guidance. the psychic lead can lead one to the peak of the spiritual consciousness and enrich one with the delight and knowledge of the divine.

As your mind's aspiration brings your psychic to the fore, which is an individual's matter of evolution of consciousness, so also the World-Mind's aspiration brings into the midst of the inhabitants of the world not a spark of the divine called the soul but a full-fledged divine in a human grab. This is the occult dynamics of Avatarhood. How does a world busy with mundane matters pray to that end ? Well, tens of true yogis have the power to embrace and even represent the World-Mind. Occult planes of Nature—the subtle mental etc.—join the yogi.



God never fails a true caller. He comes as He came as Lord Chaitanya. And God does not care to inform the Brindaban Goswamis or Krishnadas Kaviraj of His living on Earth from 1485 to 1533 A.D. under an assumed name of Sri Chaitanya. The analogy we drew between the rôle of an individual's soul in guiding the evolution of his consciousness and the rôle of the Avatar as the leader of the evolutionary movement of the consciousness of the world at large has more in it. The necessity of the Avatar at certain stages of the evolution of the world-consciousness is best 'understood', when we examine the rôle in the same world-evolution as played by an individual Yogi. What is a yogi ? One engaged in realizing the divine and doing the bidding of the divine is a yogi. Don't think physical and respiratory exercise, or having occult powers ever figures as an aim of the yoga. These may not be altogether abhorred by a yogi, who may do the Pranayam and the Rajyoga of his is a conventional yoga. Still, these are intermediate stages or, at best, the means to his aim of realizing the divine. In Sri Aurobindo yoga, for instance none of rigid steps of a conventional yoga has any relevance, since its only method is to surrender to the divine in all the parts of the being. In this sense it is the integral yoga. But every yoga, for reason of its having a union of the divine as an aim, induces great uplifting pressure on the world-consciousness. A bulk of the load of mental ignorance, vital restlessness, physical inertia and the overall hind-pull due to egoism must be borne and overcome in a vicarious capacity by the yogi. A yogi does not work for himself; not even his own liberation is his concern. He works for and on the world-forces to purify them and give them an upward thrust. An Avatar does all this tout à fait. He carries the entire humanity within his consciousness and helps in giving it a new orientation. We, men, take centuries to realize the bidding of the Avatar. But it does not fail despite the time-lag



because it is a divine will. Even more important is the kind of bridge he builds in a mystic manner between certain occult planes of consciousness as otherwise the human race would fail to ascend across them. What is more, these bridges enable the world, the earth-nature to receive the divine grace that descends from above to help ascent and in answer to its call. Some of the great Avatars have been instrumental in making certain levels of consciousness manifest on the terrestrial plane. The Rama-Avatar and the Krishna-Avatar are respectively responsible for the manifestation of the mind-proper and the overmind respectively. Sri Aurobindo came as the Avatar to manifest the supermind.

To the materialist, however, all this is a raconteur's rambling account. To a yogi every word of the foregoing is true. The tangible evidence of Lord Chaitanya's work is beginning to be discernible when western devotees too have been accepting his message of devotional love. Who can tell how many centuries before the 18th some yogi had conceived of divinity as Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. But the revolution in France with those maxims occurred as late as 1789. The causal plane conceives but the physical plane falters for a time before executing it. A remarkable evidence of this time-lag will be produced shortly. But we must understand the causal plane. The nomenclature itself is suggestive. Indeed yogis exert their spiritual thrust on higher occult planes where the fate of the terrestrial plane is to be determined. Yogis' actions alter the configuration of the causal forces of those higher planes in the best spiritual interest of the world. We understand two things at once. First, that yogis are not indifferent to the real well-being of mankind. Second, that they act more effectively because they seek to alter the cause unlike the umpteen 'ism'—advocates who try to alter the effect by acting on the effect. If human life—individual or collective—is to be changed for the better, one

must modify the resultant cause of human life rather than waste energy on the finished product of that cause. The reason why no moral or social doctrine has helped matters is that the philanthropists and political thinkers have since the time of Socrates been trying to alter the final form of individual and collective life by working on the already finalized form. This is an exercise in futility as changes of political set-up have fretfully shown the public. The yogi hits the iron while it is red. He works on the causal forces that determine the human will. If my will to murder changes, I can murder no more. If my will to love my neighbour develops, I cannot hate or injure him. To send me to prison won't force me to give up my instinct to rob others in self-interest. Only a change of my consciousness can change my actions. And yogis act at the causal level so as to change human consciousness. To judge them by the instant surface effects of their ideas is silly. It takes long for us to translate their ideas into effect.

An Avatar puts on the appearance of a typical human being to set an example for others to follow. If he showed off his divine Powers right from start, we would be daunted. Our inherent numinous would make us recoil. Therefore, Lord Chaitanya too did arduous Sadhana as if it was only so that he gained his special powers. Actually, anyone doing Sadhana with the same earnestness can gain even the highest power, namely to live in the divine consciousness. Krishnadas and others have been misled into believing that Sri Chaitanya derived his special powers from his Sadhana just like any other human Sadhak of earnestness. They did not understand that an Avatar has always an innate knowledge and an innate power while his assiduous Sadhana was meant for setting an example for men to follow. This was nothing special to Sri Chaitanya. Lord Ramkrishna and Sri Aurobindo acted likewise. Yet an Avatar is the paradigm of yogis and does humanity immense

good even more effectively than other yogis. If we regard Sri Chaitanya as a hyman being, we would notice his intellectual and moral excellence of superhuman grade.

Before I end up, let me keep my promise to tell a tale. (Note that every word of it is true. It is a report of an incident. I call it a tale in the sense in which 'tales of long march' are tales from China's political history. In fact the present tale is one of India's political history narrated by divine being.)

Once in 1915, a French Lady aged 37 told an ex-revolutionary, an Indian of 43, that Indian had been free. The hearer did receive the information as impassively as we would a radio announcement that 'there would be no change of night temperature....' He only asked, 'How ?' She replied, 'By the pressure of international situation. Neither He nor She said anything thereafter. And 32 years thereafter Her statement proved true. Yes, 32 years measured the resistance offered by the earth-nature to the Truth of the causal plane. An Avatar regulates this causal plane.



We still know far too little about the social structure and process in Bengal. In many crucial areas of knowledge, social scientists have not been able to do more than scratch the topsoil. This is partly a result of a relative scarcity of funds for training and research in the social sciences. In addition, Bengal studies outside Bangladesh and India have been seen a gradual decline—funds for research and with them the interests of many Asianists, have shown a clear shift from South Asian studies to the study of East Asia and the Pacific Rim.

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